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# INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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*Photo: Christian Erni*

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*Photo: Jens Duhl*



*Indigenous Affairs* is published 4 times per year



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**Editor: Marianne Jensen**

**Price:** Single copies US\$ 6.00 + postage (ISSN 1024-3283)

**Subscription rate for 2002** (*Indigenous Affairs + The Indigenous World*)  
US\$ 50.00 (individuals) US\$ 60.00 (institutions)

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# INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WSSD)<sup>1</sup>

By Joji Cariño

The recognition of indigenous peoples as a major group by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992, was a breakthrough enabling the political participation of indigenous peoples in various processes relating to sustainable development. However, translating this political recognition into concrete advances locally, nationally, regionally and internationally remains a big challenge for indigenous peoples.

Ten years on from UNCED, the world now prepares for the *World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)*, to be held in South Africa later this year, and which will assess progress and identify future priorities and partnerships for achieving sustainable development. Recognised as a major group, indigenous peoples are called upon to provide their own assessment of the implementation of sustainable development over the last ten years, and state which priorities and partnerships will be their contributions over the coming ten years.

A common criticism of international policy processes is their remoteness from local community realities, and that good international policies do not necessarily result in good implementation. Whether or not to participate in particular UN processes and international meetings, and for what objectives, are decisions that indigenous organisations must continually reassess and plan for, in order to make the best use of energy and resources in our varied activities.

It is time for indigenous peoples to reflect on the relevance of participation in various international conferences in terms of the advancement of indigenous peoples' rights and welfare.

## Indigenous peoples as local-global actors

Globalisation has deepened and intensified the threats of incorporation and assimilation of indigenous peoples, lands and cultures into the service of corporate gains and

state-driven development programmes. International policy processes in all areas of life also pose special challenges to indigenous peoples, who have been historically marginalized from decision-making at all levels. So what can be gained by engaging in international work?

The initial impetus for indigenous participation in international processes and international standard-setting was that of opening up political spaces and leverage for indigenous peoples and communities, particularly in situations where the national or domestic arena had not provided avenues through which to address indigenous concerns. While this approach continues to have validity, the intensification of globalisation processes makes it increasingly more difficult to separate out local, national, regional and international affairs from their various interconnections and influences. Indigenous communities and organisations are challenged to act within each and every political arena, from local to global, to greatest effect.

This situation poses distinct challenges for indigenous peoples. Historically portrayed as the epitome of isolated "local communities", yet shaped and impacted on by international forces and actors, indigenous peoples are also learning and finding their roles in contemporary international politics and environmental action. Indigenous peoples faced by destructive development projects such as mines, dams or displacement have been successful in their community struggles by combining local organising and mobilisation with the building of effective national, regional and international linkages and public awareness campaigns.

Indigenous peoples are often portrayed in the media as victims in relation to modern society. But, in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, indigenous peoples have become highly visible in many parts of the world, challenging the deep imbalances within modern societies and raising central questions about the contemporary social and ecological crisis. Indigenous values, knowledge and perspectives are increasingly respected as vital

contributions to the renewal of society and nature. Likewise, indigenous peoples have underlined the inter-relationships between social and environmental justice, asserting that "aboriginal self-determination and sustainable development are two sides of the same coin"<sup>2</sup>.

## Social learning and policy advocacy

Indigenous peoples' participation in international processes can be contextualized within a broader strategy of strengthening the voices of indigenous peoples in decision-making about our social and ecological futures - or a combined strategy of social learning and policy advocacy.

Policy advocacy includes lobbying, education and campaigning, communications and the associated research related to "organizing the strategic articulation of information to democratise unequal power relations"<sup>3</sup>. Understanding the nature of advocacy work in this broader dimension makes the inter-relationship of political action by indigenous organisations in other arenas (eg local actions, or national mobilisation, or media coverage) with lobbying in environmental negotiations aimed at reforming or promoting specific policies clearer. As indigenous organisations become more successful in their overall advocacy work, these gains can be translated into progressive policies at various political arenas where decisions are made and vice versa.

This is based on an understanding of the historic and continuing denial of the human rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination, and the perpetuation of unjust, unbalanced and unsustainable social relations, manifested also in unsustainable relationships with the Earth.

This linkage between the imbalances in social relationships and in the relationships with the earth goes to the heart of the social and ecological crisis confronting the world today, making indigenous peoples central, rather than marginal, actors in contemporary debates on sustainable development.

Narrow conceptualisations of participation in the United Nations for solely political aims would overlook a multiplicity of additional relationships that can be forged simultaneously surrounding the formal meetings: the education and networking and alliance-building opportunities that are critically important for self-realisation and the exercise of self-determination. These meetings actually provide fora for face-to-face interactions among people who seldom have the opportunity for direct contact. Thus, the elaboration and articulation of shared values and the construction of unity within a diverse movement of indigenous peoples is evolving.

Social learning has been described as a process of "learning our way out" of the current global ecological crisis caused by "modernisation and fuelled by a rational world-view, mechanistic science, territorial expansion and conquest, nation-state politics, fossil fuel based economic development and scientific development"<sup>4</sup>. By

approaching international work with social learning as well as policy advocacy objectives, one's aims go beyond what is achievable in the formal negotiations to including the exposure and understanding of the underlying assumptions and norms implicit in the UN inter-governmental structures and a visibility of alternative conceptions, politics and approaches. The act of participation makes the alternatives more visible and possible. Indigenous peoples are advancing the creation of additional sovereignties to that of the State, allowing for free and equal participation and the fullest respect and exercise of self-determination for peoples.

Politics is about changing the balance in power relations and influencing processes with regard to who, how, what and where decisions are made. Advocacy work by different actors at different levels has a bearing on the final decisions but these are ultimately made by those sitting around the negotiation table. This requires broad general knowledge about different processes and also a clear grasp of the specific issues being resolved in a particular forum or arena. To be effective politically, what is required of indigenous organisations is clarity about overall strategies and approaches at the international level, combined with detailed understanding of the issues and procedures in each political arena or policy process.

## WSSD opportunities for indigenous peoples

How can the World Summit on Sustainable Development be made relevant and open to indigenous peoples? The World Summit on Sustainable Development will result in the following outcomes:

- The Global Review of Implementation of Agenda 21;
- The Political Document or Global Commitment towards Sustainable Development (Programme of Action towards sustainable development until 2012);
- Record of Commitments and Partnerships to be announced in partnership events for official inclusion in WSSD outcomes (List of initiatives, practical measures and implementing partnerships that do not require negotiations among all States).

Evaluating implementation of the Rio Agreements ten years on from UNCED allows indigenous peoples to identify the successes, failures, obstacles, and lessons learned in realising the twin and related goals of self-determination and sustainable development, based on our own experiences and from our own perspective.

Because the WSSD process is local, national, regional and global, it lends itself to a programme of activities at local-global levels, as well as geographical or ecosystem-based activities (eg drylands, Arctic region, Amazon basin or marine and coastal zones,) sectoral and cross-sectoral activities (eg forests, energy, freshwater)

as well as global and cross-cutting activities (e.g. traditional knowledge or indigenous peoples' human rights). Based on our review of experiences, it is also timely for indigenous organisations to discuss and agree on the strategic decisions they would want to see resulting from the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as well as the financing of indigenous preparations and concrete projects and actions that can make a difference to indigenous communities. The WSSD and related activities can be used as a mechanism by indigenous peoples to further their long-term objectives and priority actions. Therefore, significant political actions to be undertaken in the lead up to WSSD can include:

- Indigenous Review of local, national, regional and international Implementation of Agenda 21 from our perspectives and concrete conditions;
- The identification of targets and actions for inclusion in the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development; and
- The building of partnerships within the indigenous peoples movement and with international organisations, governments and other civil society actors to be listed in the action agenda for sustainable development for the next ten years.

By working together in close co-ordination and with a clear strategy, indigenous peoples can make a central contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

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This issue of *Indigenous Affairs* focuses on issues of sustainable development and indigenous peoples. It seeks to give an overview of the World Summit process, the input to the process provided by indigenous people so far, and to present concrete case studies relating to sustainable development and the problems faced by indigenous peoples around the world on these issues.

The first article "Towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development - a Brief Introduction" by Birgitte Feiring gives an overview of the process from the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992 up to the current preparatory processes leading up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. It serves as a useful guide to the whole process, describing all the major mechanisms and instruments and providing links for further information.

This is followed by the "Dialogue Paper by Indigenous Peoples", which is an assessment made by indigenous peoples of the main achievements and obstacles over the last ten years within the area of sustainable development. The paper, which we bring here in its entirety, was presented by the indigenous caucus at the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the WSSD process in New York.

In the article "Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change Research in the Arctic", Mark Nuttal gives an account of

the impact on indigenous peoples in the Arctic of the climate changes taking place. He describes the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment initiative that has been launched by the Arctic Council and which represents one of the most promising ways the Arctic Council can bring Arctic voices to the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development as well as the perspectives of indigenous peoples into global climate change negotiations.

In the article "Elisabeth's Walk - Tahakuesi's Mesikani", Jane McGillivray gives a personal account of the struggle of an Innu woman to preserve the land and rich natural resources of the Innu people in Canada.

In the article "Decentralization, Natural Resource Management, and Community-Based Conservation Institutions in Southern Africa", Robert Hitchcock analyses the national policies and community initiatives in Botswana and Namibia on community-based natural resource management and conservation.

This is followed by an analysis of an emerging environmental catastrophe in Algeria. In the article "The Sahara's Indigenous Peoples, the Tuareg, Fear Environmental Catastrophe", Jeremy Keenan describes the threats towards the unique prehistoric rock art of the Tuareg people posed by mass tourism and the action that should be taken in order to avoid a catastrophe similar to the one already taking place in neighbouring Libya.

Finally, in the article "The Karen Response to Thai Conservation Policies", Chumpol Manitanavongsiri analyses the impact of the government conservation policies in Thailand on the daily lives of the Karen people. The Karen people have actively responded to these policies by forming new organizations and networks to provide a concerted response to conservation policies and to counter perceptions that the Karen are responsible for destruction of the forests.

We hope that this thematic issue of *Indigenous Affairs* will provide valuable information that can be used by indigenous peoples in their further preparations leading up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

## Notes

- 1 This editorial draws on a longer paper on "Indigenous Peoples and Global Environmental Negotiations" prepared for IWGIA.
- 2 Aqqaluk Lyngge, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference - Remarks to the UNCSD 15 April 1997, New York
- 3 Lisa Jordan and Peter van Tuijl (April 1998), *Political Responsibility and NGO Advocacy - Exploring emerging shapes of global democracy*, (manuscript)
- 4 Thomas Princen and Mathias Finger, (1994) *Environmental NGOs in World Politics*, Routledge, London and New York.

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# Towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development — a Brief Introduction

By Birgitte Feiring



Indigenous people in Cambodia. Photo: Christian Erni

## The 'Rio-process' – and its main instruments

In 1992, governments from all over the world came together in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in order to seek solutions to the unsustainable course of the world's development and global environmental degradation. The event was named the **UN Conference on Environment and Development** (UNCED) and became a landmark, putting the issue of *sustainable development* at the top of the international agenda. At UNCED, more than 178 governments adopted a set of principles and policies that have guided the international efforts for achieving sustainable development since 1992. Among these are:

- Agenda 21;
- Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Convention to Combat Desertification; and
- Framework Convention on Climate Change.

*Agenda 21* defines a comprehensive plan of actions to be taken globally, nationally and locally, specifying the social and economic dimension of sustainable development as well as the conservation and management of resources for development. Agenda 21 thus covers a wide range of issues, including human health, changing consumption patterns, protection of ecosystems such as mountains and forests, biotechnology, hazardous waste etc. etc.

Agenda 21 specifies the role of the UN system and governments in the implementation process but also recognises a number of so-called 'major groups' that all have a crucial role to play in achieving sustainable development. These 'major groups' are women, children & youth, business & industry, workers & trade unions, NGOs, the science and technology community, local authorities, farmers and indigenous peoples.

Chapter 26 of Agenda 21 addresses indigenous peoples and defines objectives, activities and means of implementation for "*Recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous peoples and their communities*". The objectives and measures outlined in Chapter 26, to be fulfilled by governments and intergovernmental organisations in full partnership with indigenous peoples include, *inter alia*:

- Recognition of indigenous values, traditional knowledge and resource management practices;
- Adoption of appropriate policies at national level;
- Arrangements for capacity-building and strengthening of active indigenous participation in policies and strategies for conservation and sustainable development.

Chapter 26 also outlines institutional and financial arrangements to ensure the implementation of these provisions, e.g. the appointment of special focal points in international organisations and the establishment of mechanisms for co-ordination and consultation.

It is obvious that indigenous peoples' interests cannot be confined to one specific chapter of the sustainable devel-

opment agenda but cut across the whole range of themes, such as agriculture, waters, forests etc. Indigenous peoples therefore also have a direct and crucial interest in the development and implementation of the more specific instruments for achieving sustainable development, such as the *Conventions on Biodiversity, Desertification and Climate Change*. All of these instruments directly address crucial issues of importance for indigenous peoples' existence and future but encompass to a varying degree specific references to indigenous peoples and mechanisms for their participation.

In the case of the *Convention to Combat Desertification* the participation of indigenous peoples in the discussions has been limited, even though the Convention is operating through the development of National Action Plans (NAPs), which should be developed in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders. However, in many cases, a lack of funding and a lack of capacity on the part of both governments and indigenous peoples to meaningfully cooperate in these processes has de facto limited the participation.

In relation to the *Framework Convention on Climate Change*, the indigenous peoples have formed an *International Indigenous Forum on Climate Change* (IIFCC), which has met four times since its first meeting in Lyon (2000). The latest meeting took place in Marrakech during the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention. The demands formulated by the IIFCC reflect the limited recognition of the particular situation and rights of indigenous peoples in the Convention on Climate Change. The IIFC, *inter alia*, thus calls upon the COP to:

- Recognize the particularity and specificity of Indigenous Peoples in relation to climate change and grant Indigenous Peoples Special Status.
- Create an Ad Hoc Open-Ended Inter-sessional Working Group on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and Climate Change whose objectives will be to study and propose timely, effective and adequate solutions to respond to the urgent situations caused by climate change that Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities face. This Working Group will provide an adequate mechanism for the imperative full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in the discussions, debates and programs of the UNFCCC; it will also be an appropriate space for channelling the contributions of our peoples and communities into climate change mitigation, and for exchanging viewpoints and experiences with the Parties of the Convention.

Recognition of indigenous peoples and their right to participation is thus still the main struggle for the indigenous participants in this forum.

Indigenous peoples have been most visible in the work of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), which in its Article 8(j) specifically states that:

*"Parties should respect, preserve and maintain knowledge and innovations and practices of indigenous and local com-*

*munities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of such knowledge-holders; and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovations and practices."*

Through their continuous work, indigenous peoples have managed to open up space for their participation within the framework of the CBD. At the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 5, Nairobi, 2000) the *International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity* (IIFB) was recognised as an advisory body to the COP and two Working Groups have been established under the CBD; one on "Article 8(j) and Related Provisions" and one on "Access and benefit-sharing" relating to genetic resources. Both Working Groups and the meetings of the COP are followed closely by the IIFB. This is an extremely demanding process, as the negotiations are highly specialised and technical, addressing complex issues with both legal, political, economic, social, cultural, spiritual and ethical aspects in a globalized context.

For example, the second meeting of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions (Montreal, February, 2002) dealt with issues such as the principles of free and prior informed consent, draft guidelines for environmental, social and cultural impact assessments, participatory mechanisms, the application of customary law in the protection of traditional knowledge vis-à-vis the intellectual property rights regimes developed within the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the establishment of registers of traditional knowledge. All of these discussions require both experience and specialised knowledge of the indigenous representatives and are not easy to transmit to the broader indigenous movement.

It is obvious that there are a number of concerns that need to be balanced when considering how to make best use of these international processes. First of all, indigenous peoples still have to struggle for their right to participate in the negotiations and even more in the decision-making processes. Furthermore, one of the biggest challenges of the IIFB and other caucuses following the international negotiations is to ensure a 'core group' that follows the processes over the years to ensure expertise and continuity in these very complicated and technical matters. On the other hand, it is important to open up the processes in order to allow new actors to enter the scene, for instance, in the case of the recently organised African indigenous peoples. Finally, it is a challenge to ensure that linkages are created between the international processes and local, national and regional processes, in order to have indigenous peoples' needs and aspirations reflected internationally, sustained by locally-rooted discussions and practices, - and have the outcome of these negotiations translated into action at community level.

In order to appropriately describe the dilemma faced by indigenous peoples in these international processes, it is relevant to go back to the 1992 UNCED, and look at the aspirations expressed there by indigenous peoples.



## The Kari-Oca Declaration and indigenous critiques of the Rio agreements

As the world's governments came together in Rio in 1992, indigenous peoples had their own summit in the Kari-Oca villages to develop their own Declaration and an 'Indigenous Peoples Earth Charter'. The Kari-Oca Declaration states the basic principles of the rights of indigenous peoples:

### THE KARI OCA DECLARATION

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

From the smallest to the largest living being, from the four directions, from the air, the land and the mountains, the creator has placed us, the Indigenous Peoples, upon our mother the earth. The footprints of our ancestors are permanently etched upon the lands of our Peoples.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, maintain our inherent rights to self-determination. We have always had the right to decide our own forms of government, to use our own ways to raise and educate our children, to our own cultural identity without interference.

We continue to maintain our rights as peoples despite centuries of deprivation, assimilation and genocide.

We maintain our inalienable rights to our lands and territories, to all our resources — above and below — and to our waters. We assert our ongoing responsibility to pass them on to the future generations.

We cannot be removed from our lands. We, the Indigenous Peoples, are connected by the circle of life to our lands and environments.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

This short text expresses the main aspects of indigenous peoples' vision of sustainable development; it is built on a spiritual relationship with the earth, it has as its precondition the recognition of indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and to land and resources. In contrast to this, all the Rio agreements, including the Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification, fail to recognise indigenous peoples' inherent rights and instead emphasise State sovereignty over natural resources. Moreover, these resources are largely seen as just another economic asset in a market logic where everything, even sacred knowledge, can be a commodity.

Last but not least, a major development since 1992 is that the process of economic globalisation has undermined even the minimum provisions outlined in the Rio agreements. A large part of the subject matters, previously debated within the framework for sustainable development, has been transferred to fora such as the WTO and WIPO, where the aim is economic rather than sustainable development, and where indigenous peoples have only very limited access and participation.

As expressed by Joji Cariño<sup>1</sup>:

*"The ongoing global environmental negotiations since Rio are about the contested terrain of 'sustainable development': its meaning, as defined by whom and for whose benefit and the conditions for and/or barriers to its realization. (...) The Rio agreements have*

*been characterized by the American Indian Law Alliance as a 'minimalist' recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, and even these have been poorly implemented (AILA, 1997). Notwithstanding these limitations, political space has been opened up for advocacy by indigenous peoples in the continuing global environmental policy dialogue."*

With these dilemmas in mind, indigenous peoples are nevertheless preparing for their participation in the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August – 4 September 2002.

## The path to Johannesburg – process and preparations

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED and to monitor and report on implementation of the Rio agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels. Now, a decade has passed since UNCED, and the CSD is preparing for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in a process that involves the UN system, governments and major groups identified as key actors in achieving sustainable development. The recognition of indigenous peoples as a major group in Agenda 21 gives indigenous peoples an official platform and a role in all the preparatory activities as well as the official Summit.

The preparations for the WSSD are taken in two steps: in the first step, a comprehensive "Assessment" is undertaken by all actors, identifying progress and obstacles to the process of achieving sustainable development. In the next step, all actors are requested to identify necessary future action for the development of a new comprehensive "Programme of action" for the next ten years (2002-12).

The process started last year, with assessments undertaken at national, sub-regional and regional levels, and by the major groups. These assessments, including that of indigenous peoples<sup>2</sup>, were presented at the *Second Preparatory Committee* (Prep Com 2) to the WSSD in New York, January 2002. The Prep Com 2 included an official two-day *multi-stakeholder dialogue* in which all major groups, including indigenous peoples, were given the opportunity to fully participate in the plenary session as well as the working groups<sup>3</sup>.

For the Prep Com 2, the Secretary-General of the UN prepared his report "Implementing Agenda 21". The report confirms the urgent need for renewed commitment to sustainable development by stating in its opening paragraphs that "progress towards the goals established at Rio has been slower than anticipated and in some respects conditions are worse than they were ten years ago". Furthermore, the report notes that there is a "gap in implementation", mainly due to four reasons:

- A fragmented approach to sustainable development, whereby policies and programmes have failed to integrate economic, social and environmental objectives within decision-making.

- Failure to change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, reflecting value systems that are among the driving forces determining the use of natural resources.
- The lack of mutually coherent policies in the areas of finance, trade, investment, technology and sustainable development, especially in the light of globalisation.
- Lack of financial resources for implementing Agenda 21, due to declining Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the rich countries and the debt burden of poor countries (E/CN.17/2002/PC.2/7, page 4-5)

The *Prep Com 3* to the WSSD will take place in New York, from 25 March – 5 April 2002. The meeting will aim to finalise the *assessment* of the previous ten years of implementation of Agenda 21 and come up with conclusions and recommendations for future action. This Prep Com does not include an official multi-stakeholder dialogue but will still provide an opportunity for indigenous peoples to try to influence the official documents.

The *Prep Com 4* will take place in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 27 May – 7 June 2002. This meeting will draw upon the agreed text from the previous Prep Com to prepare a "Programme of Action" towards sustainable development until 2012 and a "Record of Commitments and Partnerships", listing initiatives, practical measures and partnerships that do not require negotiations among all States. This meeting will include a *multi-stakeholder dialogue* session, including indigenous peoples as a major group.

In addition to the assessment and the programme of action, *side events* based on partnerships are expected to be an important part of the WSSD. These partnerships will be listed in the official *Record of Commitments and Partnerships* and will thus contribute to the strategy for further action towards sustainable development beyond the Summit itself.

## Mega-level political debates

Generally, there seems to be broad agreement that the outcome of the WSSD should not be a set of new conventions or policies but rather a renewed focus on the implementation of the existing instruments that emerged from the Rio process. However, there also seems to be general agreement that in order to achieve a renewed political commitment towards sustainable development, there is a need for an overall framework encompassing the different main elements of a new global strategy.

So far, two governments have taken initiatives to launch ideas for new global 'mega-level' political frameworks. These are the Danish and the South-African governments. The Danish initiative is named the '*Global Deal*' and is a loosely-defined framework for a deal between countries in the North and the South (rich and poor). Without going into details, the *Global Deal* sketches out the following elements as central to such a 'Deal':

- Strengthened free trade and better market access for developing countries combined with international standards for environment and labour;
- Better financing of development through improved and increased development assistance (i.e., the 0.7% target) with a view to poverty reduction; and
- Strengthened international co-operation on climate and environment, implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and transfer of environmentally sustainable technologies

The South African initiative was launched in a speech by the South African Deputy Environmental Minister, Rejoice Mabudafhasi, under the heading *People, Planet & Prosperity*, which is also now being proposed as the slogan of the WSSD. The South African initiative gives top priority to poverty eradication, thereby expressing the concern of most poor countries, but is in no way incompatible with the elements of the Global Deal. The South African initiative lists the following priorities:

- Poverty eradication;
- Agriculture and food security;
- Human development;
- Trade market access;
- Financing for development;
- Marine and coastal environments; and
- Issues of governance.

It is clear from both proposals that strategies for sustainable development, in the era of globalisation, cover practically everything, involving elements such as trade, debt and financing for development and are thus dependent on institutions such as the World Bank, WTO, IMF etc.

In this sense, the outcome of the WSSD will depend very much on the results achieved in other processes, such as the negotiations at the International Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place in Monterrey, Mexico in March 2002.

Another lesson learned since the 1992 UNCED is that economic globalisation and free trade have weakened national-level regulation of corporate activities while international rules governing investments and economic activities remain very weak. One of the major NGO initiatives for the WSSD is thus to push for mandatory regulatory norms and rules to set environmental and social standards for the behaviour of transnational companies. This initiative is being launched under the slogan of *corporate accountability* and should, potentially, be of great interest to indigenous peoples, who have continuously called upon the private sector to respect indigenous rights.

## Indigenous coordination for the WSSD

Over the years, the work of the CSD has been followed by the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group Caucus. The Caucus is relatively small and, with the WSSD coming up, indigenous representatives have made use of other events in order to inform the broader indigenous movement

about the WSSD preparations. Preparations for the WSSD were discussed at the Working Group for Indigenous Populations in Geneva, July 2001, at the Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing in Bonn, October 2001, at a Workshop in Denmark hosted by IWGIA in November 2001 and at the Prep Com 2 in New York, January 2002. Following these discussions, a *Coordinating Committee* has been established with the objectives of serving as a focal point for communications with the different regions, drafting and submitting necessary documents/position papers to the UN and preparing a calendar of events and a programme of work, including an agenda of indigenous side-events during the Summit.

In addition to this, the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group Caucus has appointed three co-facilitators for specific regions, with the task of facilitating the liaison between the WSSD/CSD and the Coordinating Committee as well as making suggestions on documents to be drafted by the Coordinating Committee and taking care of the archives and the indigenous WSSD listserv. The indigenous WSSD listserv serves as the main tool for communications and is operated by the Tebtebba Foundation, Philippines<sup>4</sup>.

The Coordinating Committee for indigenous peoples' participation in the WSSD is composed of:

- Indigenous Information Network/African Indigenous Women's Organization (Lucy Mulenket, Kenya)
- National Khoisan Consultative Council (Cecil le Fleur, South Africa)
- COICA, Amazon Region
- Consejo de Todas las Tierras (José Nain, Chile)
- Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena (Onel Arias, Central America)
- Indigenous Environmental Network (Tom Goldtooth, USA)
- AMAN (Indonesia)
- Tebtebba Foundation (Joji Cariño, Philippines)
- Saami Council (Anne Nuorgam, Finland)
- International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forest (Stella Tamang, Nepal)
- RAIPON, (Mikhail Todyshev, Pavel Sulyandziga, Russia)

The co-facilitators of the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group Caucus for specific regions in preparation for the WSSD are:

- Carol Kalafatic (International Indian Treaty Council, for North America)
- Victoria Corpuz-Tauli (Tebtebba Foundation, for Asia)
- Carlos Eden (Kaweshkar, for Latin America, Amazon region)

Just as the indigenous participants in the 1992 UNCED had their pre-summit in Kari-Oca, so now are indigenous peoples also planning a pre-summit in South Africa. The pre-summit should allow indigenous participants to discuss regional and thematic processes and priorities and strategies for their participation in the WSSD. Furthermore, the pre-summit should provide an opportunity to share experiences with the indigenous peoples of South

Africa. The further planning of the pre-summit will obviously depend on availability of resources but, so far, the event is planned to take place in the town of Kimberley, from 20-24 August 2002. The South African National Khoisan Consultative Council, represented by Cecil Le Fleur, is in charge of the logistical arrangements on the ground.

## Useful links

In order to join the indigenous WSSD listserv and get to know about recent developments and activities as indigenous peoples prepare for the WSSD, contact [tebtebba@skyinet.net](mailto:tebtebba@skyinet.net) for more information. More information and indigenous documents and statements can be found on the web site of the Tebtebba Foundation: [www.tebtebba.org](http://www.tebtebba.org)

### English:

The Indigenous Environmental Network is an alliance of grassroots indigenous peoples whose mission is to protect the sacredness of Mother Earth from contamination and exploitation by strengthening, maintaining and respecting the traditional teachings and natural laws. The IEN web site contains documents and useful links on the WSSD: [www.ienearth.org](http://www.ienearth.org)

### English/Spanish/German:

The Climate Alliance is an association of European cities and municipalities that have entered into a partnership with indigenous rainforest peoples. The site contains documents of the International Indigenous Forum on Climate Change: [www.klimabuendnis.org](http://www.klimabuendnis.org)

### English/Spanish/French/Portuguese:

Web site for the preparations of the NGO Major Group in the WSSD. The site contains NGO documents and discussion as well as analysis and discussion of official initiatives: [www.Rio10.dk](http://www.Rio10.dk)

### The official UN web site for the WSSD:

[www.johannesburgsummit.org](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org)

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Rio agreements:

(English) [www.un.org/esa/sustdev](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev)

(Spanish) [www.un.org/spanish/esa/desa](http://www.un.org/spanish/esa/desa)

The Convention on Biological Diversity: [www.biodiv.org](http://www.biodiv.org)

The Framework Convention on Climate Change: [www.unfccc.int](http://www.unfccc.int)

The Convention to Combat Desertification:

[www.unccd.int](http://www.unccd.int)

## Notes

- 1 Unpublished paper: Indigenous peoples and global environmental negotiations, 2001.
- 2 This assessment, 'Dialogue Paper by Indigenous Peoples' is presented in this issue, page 12.
- 3 For the full interventions of indigenous participants in the Prep Com 2, see: [www.tebtebba.org](http://www.tebtebba.org)
- 4 Contact: [tebtebba@skyinet.net](mailto:tebtebba@skyinet.net) for more information on how to join the listserv.

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# DIALOGUE PAPER BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

By the CSD Indigenous Peoples' Caucus



## Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue Paper for the WSSD process

*As part of the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and as one of the nine officially recognised "major groups" in the process, indigenous peoples are requested to present their assessment of the main achievements and obstacles over the last ten years within the framework of sustainable development. The present Dialogue Paper was presented by the indigenous caucus at the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the WSSD process (New York 28 Jan. – 8 Feb. 2002) as a first contribution. The paper will be the basis for continuing dialogue with other major groups, the UN, member-states, and among indigenous peoples themselves.*

*The paper has been prepared based on input from the indigenous representatives present at the WSSD coordination workshop in Copenhagen November 2001 as well as input from other indigenous organisations worldwide. However, it is important to note that the document is still a text in progress, and input and comments from indigenous peoples are most welcome in order to ensure as comprehensive a document as possible. Additional points and comments should be sent to: Joji Carino [tongtong@gn.apc.org](mailto:tongtong@gn.apc.org), or Vicky Tauli-Corpuz [tebbeba@skyinet.net](mailto:tebbeba@skyinet.net), at Tebbeba Foundation until July 31, 2002 for inclusion into a document for WSSD.*



*"We came seeking justice on our homelands. We came here to appeal to the world at large to support our efforts to seek equitable solutions to discrimination, exploitation, racism, ethnocide and genocide of Indigenous Nations and Peoples.*

*We came here to speak on behalf of the natural world being plundered by governments and corporations. We spoke on behalf of rooted trees that could not flee the chainsaw. We spoke on behalf of salmon, herring, tuna and haddock killed in their spawning beds. We had alarming news from the Four Directions about fish, wildlife and birds, contaminated, sick and disappearing. And today we continue to speak on their behalf. Today they are more endangered than ever and, if anything, their conditions are worse.*

*In these times, humanity must work together, not just for survival but for quality of life based on universal values that protect the delicate inter-relatedness of life that protects us all. ...Biodiversity is a clinical, technical term for this intricate inter-weaving of life that sustains us. We indigenous peoples say that we are related to this life; thus your "resources" are our relations. It is all in how you look at it.*

*Indigenous Peoples have something to offer in this equation for survival ... We have common goals and responsibilities, and I say that you, the leaders of this great hope of the world's people, the United Nations, should be working with us and not against us, for peace. We submit to you that as long as you make war against Etenoha (Mother Earth), there can never be peace."*

Chief Oren Lyons of the Onandaga Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This background paper submitted in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) will review developments in the past ten years after Rio in order to highlight achievements, obstacles, threats and challenges in the implementation of the Rio agreements, focusing on indigenous peoples and sustainable development. The commitments made in Chapter 26 of Agenda 21 "Strengthening the Role of Indigenous People and their Communities", as well as other Rio commitments, are the starting point of this

assessment, and linkages are also made with the other international processes with a bearing on this theme.

Chapter 26 states: "In view of the interrelationship between the natural environment and its sustainable development and the cultural, social, economic and physical well-being of indigenous people, national and international efforts to implement environmentally sound and sustainable development should recognize, accommodate, promote and strengthen the role of indigenous people and their communities."



Photo: Jens Dørf



Photo: Jens Dørf

Indigenous peoples are at the cutting edge of the crisis in sustainable development. Their communities are concrete examples of sustainable societies, historically evolved in diverse ecosystems. Today, they face the challenges of extinction or survival and renewal in a globalized world. One clear criterion for sustainable development and Agenda 21 implementation must be actions taken to secure indigenous peoples' rights and welfare.

The past 10 years have highlighted the vital role and contributions of indigenous peoples to sustainable development. Indigenous peoples comprise five per cent of the world's population but embody 80 per cent of the world's cultural diversity. They are estimated to occupy 20% of the world's land surface but nurture 80% of the world's biodiversity on ancestral lands and territories. Rainforests of the Amazon, Central Africa, Asia and Melanesia are home to over half of the total global spectrum of indigenous peoples and, at the same time, contain some of the highest species biodiversity in the world. The Traditional Native American Farmers Association estimates that Indigenous Peoples cultivated 65% of the crop varieties consumed throughout the world.

The past ten years have also seen the intensification of conflicting trends in addressing the imbalances in social and ecological relationships that underpin the global crisis in sustainable development:

- a) The rise of economic neo-liberalism and corporate globalisation and the attendant commodification and 'privatisation' of social and ecological values; and
- b) The resurgence of indigenous peoples' movements, local community and citizen's movements and transnational partnerships asserting the primacy of sustainable local communities and cultures and ecological integrity.

This conflict is evident in the disjuncture between global economic, financial and trade decisions made by the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which are blocking and constricting national and local options, and efforts to define flexible sustainable development paths, as encouraged in the global policy dialogue on environment and sustainable development. This lack of coherence in global policy processes is blocking the implementation of positive measures supportive of indigenous peoples' self-determination and sustainable development.

### **Intensifying pressures on indigenous lands**

The accelerating processes of globalisation since UNCED expose the vulnerabilities of indigenous peoples when left to the logic of states and markets, without adequate protection of their rights. A *laissez-faire* environment of liberalised and expanding trade, investment, production and consumption is resulting in continuing land alienation and forcible displacement of indigenous peoples.

As the pressures on the Earth's resources intensify, indigenous peoples bear disproportionate costs of resource-intensive and resource-extractive industries and activities such as mining, oil and gas development, large dams and other infrastructure projects, logging and plantations, bio-prospecting, industrial fishing and farming, and also eco-tourism and imposed conservation projects. These pressures also accelerate some unsustainable economic activities carried out by indigenous peoples them-



selves, notably where indigenous rights have not been respected, thus leaving communities with insufficient land and resources.

Contrary to Agenda 21, which states that the lands of indigenous peoples should be protected from activities that are either environmentally unsound or considered by indigenous peoples to be socially and culturally inappropriate, the growth in the global economy has accelerated the intrusion of transnational corporations into ancestral lands and communities. The World Bank and the regional development banks play a key role in promoting mining and other extractive industries and in promoting the macro-economic fiscal, institutional and legal reforms that facilitate international investment in extractive industries in developing countries. In the case of the World Bank, this is done through programmatic lending, structural and sectoral adjustment lending, project loans to national governments, equity investments and loans to private sector operators through the International Finance Corporation and by providing political risk insurance through the MIGA.

In Alaska, the 1.5 million acre coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) is under clear threat of oil exploration pending legislation that would undermine the Refuge's currently protected status. This area is the birthplace of the Porcupine caribou herd, upon which the subsistence, culture and way of life of the Gwich'in Athabascan Peoples of Alaska and Canada depend.

In central Oklahoma, United States, the very existence of the Kickapoo Nation and the health of their land and water resources are under threat by an impending North American North-South superhighway from Canada to Mexico, part of which will run through the reservation of the Kickapoo. Under the auspices of NAFTA, plans for the superhighway have been under way for four years, yet the United States has failed to formally discuss these plans with the Kickapoo Nation.

Mining exploration and development in the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Peru, Guyana, Colombia, Ghana and many other countries are a serious threat to indigenous peoples and local communities.

The revival of the Bakun Dam in Malaysia, which requires the clear-cutting of 80,000 hectares of rainforests, and forced displacement of 5,000 – 8,000 indigenous persons from 15 communities, is a prime example of unsustainability, in the light of preferable energy options.

The biggest challenge faced by indigenous peoples and communities in relation to sustainable development is to ensure territorial security; the legal recognition of our ownership and control over customary land and resources, and the sustainable utilization of our land and other renewable resources for our cultural, economic and physical health and well-being.

Indigenous peoples have acted vigorously to overcome these threats by mobilising locally and internationally to stop destructive projects in the short-term, and to address the underlying causes of resource conflicts in the longer term. An international conference on Conflict Resolution, Peace Building, Sustainable Development and Indigenous Peoples<sup>2</sup> attended by indigenous participants from all global regions, affirmed the importance to be self-determining: in the care for mother earth, in the languages spoken, in the education of our children, in conflict resolution, and in the renewal of the institutions and values of our ancestors.

In many countries, indigenous peoples have successfully halted some destructive projects. Mining development has been stopped by indigenous communities in the Philippines, Panama and Norway through local protest actions, media exposure, campaigns aimed at shareholders and investors, and through court action. The Innu have stopped the building of a new NATO base on their lands.

Communities in the Amazon basin have become knowledgeable about the impact of oil development and have organised themselves for informed engagements with oil companies ranging from community opposition to dialogue and negotiations. After learning of the devastating impacts of oil extraction in other provinces of Ecuador, the Quichua of Sarayacu gathered, in Assemblies recognised as valid by the government of Ecuador, to discuss the environmental and cultural threats posed by the oil industry. The primary result was a formal resolution to unequivocally reject oil development. Following this resolution, promises of "unconditional" economic support have provoked divisions within the communities and the extraction of signed agreements with individuals rather than with the appropriate representatives of the Quichua communities, thereby undermining the Quichua's legitimate and democratically chosen leadership.

In Mindoro Island in the Philippines, long-standing Mangyan indigenous organizations, with pending ancestral land claims over an area likewise claimed by Mindex/Crew Development, found that the State agency responsible for indigenous affairs, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), worked with the company to establish a new indigenous organization supportive of the mining project, in return for the promise of recognition of ancestral land rights in the same area.<sup>3</sup>

Negotiations between indigenous communities, governments and corporations are more likely in countries with a clear legal framework for indigenous rights. Furthermore, transitions from military regimes to democratic governments also provide the political space for the introduction and recognition of indigenous rights. In a number of countries, peace agreements have been concluded between governments and indigenous peoples, including Guatemala, the Philippines, northeast India and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. There remain many countries, however, where indigenous peoples suffer from militarisation and government control.

Longer-term security for indigenous peoples requires legal recognition of their rights to ownership and control of their lands, territories and natural resources. Many indigenous communities are mapping their traditional lands and territories, initiating a processes for cultural renewal and community strengthening, as well as serving as a basis for government recognition of their lands and customary use. Gains have been made, for example, in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines in Asia; in Venezuela, Guyana, Peru and Brazil in Latin America; and in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia in Africa. The Russian government has passed a law recognising and protecting areas of traditional land use.

These important gains are often overshadowed by the widespread violations of indigenous land rights in the development process. The UN Special-Rapporteur Mrs. Erica Irene-Daes, in her Final Working Paper on *Indigenous Peoples and their Relationship to Land*, put forward a framework for the analysis of contemporary problems regarding indigenous land rights, highlighting:

- Failure of states to acknowledge indigenous rights to lands, territories and resources;
- Discriminatory laws and policies affecting indigenous peoples in relation to their lands;
- Failure to demarcate;
- Failure of states to enforce or implement laws protecting indigenous lands;
- Problems in regard to land claims and return of lands;
- Expropriation of indigenous lands for national interests, including development;
- Removal and relocation;
- Other government programmes and policies adversely affecting indigenous peoples' relationship to their lands, territories and resources; and
- Failure to protect the integrity of the environment of indigenous lands and territories.

### **International standards on the rights of indigenous peoples**

Indigenous peoples' rights have assumed an important place in international human rights law. This body of law is still expanding and developing through





*Fields of the Hmong people, Vietnam. Photo: Christian Entz*

Indigenous advocacy in international fora; through the decisions of international human rights bodies; through recognition and codification of Indigenous rights in international instruments presently under consideration by the United Nations and Organization of American States; through incorporation of Indigenous rights into conservation, environmental and development-related instruments and policies; through incorporation of these rights into domestic law and practice; and through domestic judicial decisions.<sup>4</sup> Indigenous rights have attained the status of customary international law and are therefore generally binding on states. International law recognises the rights of indigenous peoples to:

- Self-determination;
- Ownership, control and management of their traditional territories, lands and resources;
- Exercise their customary law;
- Represent themselves through their own institutions;
- Free, prior and informed consent to developments on their land; and
- Control, and share in the benefits of the use of, their traditional knowledge.

Self-determination for indigenous peoples means "the right to control over their institutions, territories, resources, social orders, and cultures without external domination or interference, and their right to establish their relationship with the dominant society and the state on the basis of consent."<sup>5</sup>

International bodies mandated with the protection of human rights have paid particular attention to Indigenous rights in recent years. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the UN Human Rights Committee, the International Labour Organization's Committee of Experts and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights all stand out in this respect. These bodies have contributed to the progressive development of Indigenous rights by interpreting human rights instruments of general application to account for and protect the collective rights of Indigenous peoples. Even the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has begun to address Indigenous peoples' rights by taking the important step of establishing a working group on Indigenous peoples in Africa.<sup>6</sup>

Their recent judgements and decisions provide important guidance for States and Corporations about meeting their human rights obligations with respect to indigenous peoples.

The UN Sub-Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights approved the draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 1994. All governments, in furtherance of their Rio commitments and human rights obligations, must move towards its early adoption by the General Assembly. This is a major political goal within the UN Decade for Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004), and an important activity under Agenda 21. Its achievement will signal a real openness and seriousness by governments to enter into a "New Partnership" with indigenous peoples for sustainable development.

The absence of universally-agreed standards on the rights of indigenous peoples is a major obstacle to fully empowering indigenous peoples to play their role in sustainable development. It was noted by the UN Secretary General in his mid-term Report on the UN Decade for Indigenous Peoples that, "No universal standards on indigenous peoples guide the United Nations as a whole and, in practice, United Nations organisations are either not adopting any particular guidelines or else are developing guidelines on the basis of different procedures."<sup>7</sup>

The processes leading to the adoption of the Draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples enjoyed the open and full participation of indigenous peoples, governments, international organisations and scholars; and has resulted in its broad endorsement as the minimum standards by which to secure the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples. In the words of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>8</sup>:

*"The United Nations draft declaration states the link between human rights and development, namely that the one is not possible without the other. Thus, economic improvements cannot be envisaged without protection of land and resource rights. Rights over land need to include recognition of the spiritual relation indigenous peoples have with their ancestral territories. And the economic base that land provides needs to be accompanied by a recognition of indigenous peoples' own political and legal institutions, cultural traditions and social organizations. Land and culture, development, spiritual values and -knowledge are as one. To fail to recognize one is to fail on all."*

The UN General Assembly, at its Millennium Session, approved the establishment of a UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as an advisory body to the ECOSOC, meeting for the first time in May 2002. Its broad mandate, covering social and economic, environment, development, education, health, human rights and all matters affecting indigenous peoples, makes this potentially a very important focus for promoting indigenous peoples' rights-based sustainable development.

Other organisations in the United Nations system such as the UNDP, UNESCO, WHO and WIPO have also adopted policies and programmes on Indigenous Peoples.

The Commission on Human Rights has recently appointed a Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People. His first report, due in 2002, will complement other special studies which have also been completed including Protection of the Heritage of Indigenous Peoples (1995); Treaties, Agreements and Other Constructive Arrangements Between Indigenous Peoples and States (1999); and Indigenous Peoples Relationships to Land (2001).

## On prior informed consent

In a context of increasing recognition of the rights to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, the principle of **free, prior and informed consent** of indigenous peoples to development projects and plans affecting them has emerged as the standard to be applied in protecting and promoting their rights in the development process. Article 7(1) of ILO Convention 169 provides that:

*The people concerned shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development.*

This article is one of the general principles of the Convention and provides a framework within which other articles can be interpreted. Other general principles of the Convention require participation, consultation and good faith negotiation.

In its 1997 General Recommendation, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination elaborated on state obligations and Indigenous rights under the Convention. The Committee called upon states parties to:

*... ensure that members of indigenous peoples have equal rights in respect of effective participation in public life, and that no decisions directly relating to their rights and interests are taken without their informed consent.<sup>9</sup>*

In the Concluding Observations on Australia's report, the Committee reiterated in 2000:

*... its recommendation that the State party ensure effective participation by indigenous communities in decisions affecting their land rights, as required under article 5(c) of the Convention and General Recommendation XXIII of the Committee, which stresses the importance of ensuring the "informed consent" of indigenous peoples.<sup>10</sup>*

Building upon these principles, Article 30 of the UN's Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples acknowledges that:

*Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands, territories and other resources, including the right to require the State to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands, territories and other resources particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources...*

In the Philippines, free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples is required by law for the following activities: exploration, development and use of natural resources; research and bioprospecting; displacement and relocation; archaeological explorations; policies affecting indigenous peoples like Executive Order 263 (Community-based Forest Management) and entry of the military.

The definition of prior informed consent in the Indigenous People's Rights Act of the Philippines provides that:

- All members of the community affected consent to the decision;
- Consent is determined in accordance with customary laws and practices;
- Freedom from external manipulation, interference or coercion;
- Full disclosure of the intent and scope of the activity
- Decision is made in language understandable to the community; and
- Decision is made in process understandable to the community.

In the coming years, a better understanding of this standard and its application will be important for the implementation of sustainable development programmes with indigenous peoples.

### **Indigenous peoples in global environmental negotiations**

It is not surprising that indigenous issues have figured prominently in the policy deliberations and negotiations to implement the Rio agreements on Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Sustainable Forest Management, Persistent Organic Pollutants and Hazardous Wastes; as well as in other debates on trade liberalisation, intellectual property rights, debt and structural adjustment and financing for development.

### **Cultural and biological diversity**

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognises the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities and has developed a cross-cutting work programme on traditional knowledge and other related articles of the Convention.

The CBD Conference of Parties, at its 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting, established an open-ended inter-sessional working group on the implementation of Article 8j and related provisions of the Convention on traditional knowledge. The creation of this body, with the support of many governments and strong lobbying by indigenous peoples' organisations, makes it potentially a significant forum for policy exchanges and policy formulation.

The CBD as such, affords indigenous peoples very limited and weak protection of their cultural and intellectual property. The CBD does not seek to challenge the legitimacy or operation of intellectual property law, merely recognizing that intellectual property rights can act to assist governments in the conservation of biological diversity. Another main weakness of the CBD is its strong emphasis on national sovereignty over biodiversity, without adequate recognition of indigenous territories. Provisions for benefit sharing would also rely on governments to recognize and enforce this right.

Some advances can be made, primarily through national legislation and regional frameworks (e.g. the Andean Pact). Gains can be made here in terms of strengthening the prior informed consent of indigenous peoples, and raising awareness and understanding of *sui generis* arrangements to strengthen control of indigenous peoples. Of course, these positive steps can be taken regardless of the CBD, by governments serious about indigenous peoples' rights. The 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP5) of the CBD decided on:<sup>21</sup>

- Recognition of the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities from local to international level in a wide variety of CBD work programmes;
- Recognition of the special roles of women from indigenous peoples and local communities in the conservation of biodiversity;
- Recognition of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity as advisory body to the COP;
- Promotion of the nomination of members of indigenous peoples and local communities to the international roster of experts;
- Promotion of indigenous delegates within official delegations of CBD processes; and
- The continuation of the Working Group on Article 8j and related provisions concerning traditional knowledge.

The creation of a Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing which recognizes the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities and the principle of prior informed consent for any potential use of their knowledge.

Efforts must be made to ensure implementation of CBD obligations through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, through its work programmes and processes, has been innovative in addressing the concerns of indigenous peoples. Its ecosystem approach accords well with indigenous realities and allows substantive participation in its work programmes. The linkages between the CBD and other environmental conventions can work to address some inconsistencies in the narrower, econometric or technocratic approaches of the climate negotiations.

## On climate change and indigenous peoples

In the global climate negotiations, indigenous peoples have expressed concerns that current discussions within the Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the practical implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, do not provide for their adequate participation. They are profoundly concerned that the measures to mitigate climate change currently being negotiated such as plantations, carbon sinks and tradeable emissions, will result in projects which adversely impact upon their natural, sensitive and fragile eco-systems, contaminating soils, forests and waters, which already perform important climate functions. They are concerned that the current proposed definitions of afforestation, deforestation, and reforestation pose a threat to Indigenous Peoples' traditional use of their lands and territories. In the past, even well-intentioned development policies and projects have resulted in disastrous social and ecological consequences. Under the UNFCCC, the technocratic concepts, policies and measures being negotiated fail to consider the best interests of Indigenous Peoples.

## Global policy dialogue on forests<sup>12</sup>

Emerging United Nations' standards related to forests affirm:

- a) Secure land rights for indigenous people;
- b) Full participation in forest policy-making;
- c) Recognition of traditional forest-related knowledge;
- d) Promotion of community-based forest management.

In practice, both large-scale logging and plantations have commonly been carried out in violation of these rights and principles. The land rights of indigenous peoples in forests are commonly denied and resistance to forestry development has often been met with further human rights violations. The undermining of forest-based livelihoods, impoverishment, the erosion of cultural identity, dispossession and increased mortality rates are all widely documented as results of forest exploitation. Indigenous women have suffered particular hardship and human rights abus.

Recent forestry "best practice" asserts indigenous peoples' rights, prioritises well-being and community control of forests and forestry decision-making. Efforts

to promote reforms through independent, third party certification have had mixed results. Successes have been achieved in recognising indigenous use rights and in promoting community-based management in boreal forests. In the tropics, best practice cases are more rare, frustrated by lack of good governance, absence of law and order and inadequate forestry regulations.

New technologies are helping forest-based indigenous peoples to map their own lands, assert their land claims and develop novel forest management systems based on traditional forest-related knowledge and customary law. However, repressive states are now seeking to outlaw such techniques and retain forests for the use of large-scale companies.

In many countries, translating agreed international human rights and forestry standards into practice will require private sector companies to operate at standards higher than national laws require. If private sector companies seek to operate in areas claimed by indigenous peoples, they must respect customary rights holders as the legitimate owners of the land and accept the principle that the local communities have the rights to free, prior and informed consent to whatever is planned in their lands and forests. A commitment to enter into negotiated and legally binding agreements between private sector operators and indigenous peoples will help restore equitable relations between developers and forest-based indigenous communities.

In the longer term, national policy, legal and institutional reforms will all be required to secure indigenous peoples' rights and ensure a future for forests based on the principles of justice and equity.

Taking into account the specific demands and proposals for action made by indigenous peoples to the UNCSO, the following proposals have not been accepted by the intergovernmental process:<sup>13</sup>

- e) Self-determination and self-development;
- f) Recognition as distinct "peoples";
- g) Explicit recognition of the right to own, use and control territories;
- h) Prior informed consent for activities and decisions affecting indigenous territories;
- i) Mainstreaming of the Draft UN Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Agenda 21 and the Forest Principles and National Forest Programmes; and
- j) Funding to support indigenous peoples' participation in UN fora.

## Traditional production and trade and conservation

In recent years, customary production and economic activities by indigenous peoples have been damaged by conservation approaches that fail to work with indigenous peoples and local communities concerned.



*Huong girls and village, Vietnam.  
Photo: Christian Erni*



*Pollution from oil production, Peru.  
Photo: Alejandro Paredón*



*Sun in the Kalahari Desert, Botswana.  
Photos: Christian Erni and Arthur Kraußharhoff*



Traditional activities, like the sustainable hunting and harvesting of marine mammals by the Arctic peoples and rotational *swidden* agriculture by the forest peoples in Asia, Latin America and the Pacific, are important for the livelihoods and well being of communities, and have been proven historically to be socially and ecologically sustainable.

Following years of negative lobbying campaigns by conservation organisations in Europe, the sealskin industry has collapsed, with devastating impacts on the Inuits. Sale of sealskins was once the main source of cash income for many Inuit families and seal hunting was central to traditional culture and values. The loss of this revenue has been catastrophic, beyond its economic impacts, including negative social, cultural, nutritional and psychological effects.

The right of the Inuit to continue this traditional sustainable harvesting activity must be recognised and strategies developed to revitalize and restore the Arctic sealing industry.<sup>14</sup>

The catch phrase "slash and burn agriculture" has been applied indiscriminately to undermine varied systems of indigenous rotational agriculture in forested and hilly areas with an image of environmental destruction. Historical and current research, including studies done by indigenous researchers, have shown this to be a sustainable and adaptive system capable of changing to suit differing circumstances while remaining loyal to the idea of self-reliance in food production. It is often combined with wet rice paddy, animal husbandry, specialized cropping, kitchen gardens, hunting and agro-forestry in order to supply the needs of indigenous villages.<sup>15</sup>

Support must be given to land recovery, renewal and the strengthening of traditional production systems, which have contributed to biodiversity, including its conservation and sustainable use. Likewise, support must be given to Indigenous Peoples' programs to conserve the biodiversity and manage the resources within their lands and territories. This includes support for Indigenous Peoples to protect and/or collect their traditional knowledge, practices, seeds and other resources through: (i) effective use of their own *in situ* methods and institutions and (ii) access to and effective use of non-Indigenous technologies.

Native seeds and other foods that are essential to the survival of Indigenous Peoples are threatened by the development, cultivation and other use of genetically modified seeds, plants, fish and other organisms.

## Sustainable agriculture and rural development

Agenda 21 maintains that two of the various elements that will determine the success of sustainable agriculture and rural development are land conservation and the participation of rural people. Indigenous Peoples carry millennial knowledge founded in generations of

hunting and agricultural practices, land management and sustainable water use, and agriculture-related engineering and architecture. The maintenance of these cultural and spiritual relationships with the natural world are key to their survival as Peoples or civilisations. The Mayans are the "Corn People," while Gwich'in Athabascans are "Caribou People". Traditional clan systems include the Bear, Eagle and even Sweet Potato Clans among Seminole people.

The maintenance of these cultural and spiritual relationships is also vital to the conservation of biodiversity. This historical interdependence and relationship with specific ecosystems underpins the technical and scientific contributions of indigenous knowledge to critical research, related to sustainable development based on an ecosystem approach. Many traditional practitioners are experts at reading indicator species that provide very early warning signals of coming environmental or food catastrophes and meteorological changes such as global warming.

In nations of the Pacific, such as Tuvalu and Kiribati, which mainly comprise low-lying coral atolls, underground freshwater sources are being displaced by sea-water as the sea level rises. The Dayaks of Kalimantan have noticed dramatic decline of their rice paddy fields over the last seven years down to below one ton per hectare, due to the disappearance of order in rainy and dry seasons. Severe storms and hurricanes in Central America have killed hundreds of people and destroyed the villages and livelihoods of the Mayas, Garifunas and Nahuals. In the Amazon rainforest, indigenous peoples and local communities have noticed a decrease in rain levels and an extension of the dry season. Frequent droughts and the decrease in rain have increased forest fires, affecting hunting, fishing and over-all food security. In Burkina Faso, droughts have become more frequent and changes in the rainy season are disrupting local agricultural systems. In Rwanda, the extended drought causes thirsty insects to attack tree species used for food. Loss of biodiversity has decreased the species used for food, medicines and rituals. In many countries, sicknesses such as malaria have become endemic due to the increase of insect vectors.

Such detailed local knowledge complements and contributes to scientific work on climate. For example, Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic region are contributing to research on the Impacts of Climate Change through the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), recently adopted by the Arctic Council.<sup>16</sup>

## Regional and ecosystem approaches

The Arctic Council is a high-level forum of the governments of the eight Arctic states (USA, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland



Photos from Peru: Alejandro Panellada



and Russia) and is charged with working out appropriate ways forward for environmental protection and sustainable development in the Arctic. The Arctic Council includes several indigenous peoples' organisations, such as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, as permanent participants. The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment was formally adopted and launched by the Arctic Council in October 2000. ACIA will be documented in three volumes, due to be published in 2004 and will address the question of what strategies can be recommended to cope with and adapt to current and future environmental stresses, and possibly lessen the impacts of these changes in the climate and ultraviolet radiation. These recommendations will include advice relevant to national and international policy as well as advice to inhabitants of the Arctic. Of special concern to indigenous peoples are key chapters on indigenous perspectives on climate change and on the impacts of climate change on the uses of living marine and terrestrial resources. ACIA represents one of the most promising ways the Arctic Council can bring Arctic voices to the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) as well as the perspectives of indigenous peoples into global climate change negotiations.

Amazon indigenous peoples are likewise calling for the treatment of the Amazon Basin as a unique ecosystem requiring the co-operation of governments, indigenous peoples, civil society organisations and other interested parties for the purposes of sustainable development and conservation.

Positive lessons from the Arctic Council experience can be learned for broader application in other global regions, using an ecosystem approach and collaborative partnerships.

## Health issues

From a traditional perspective, the health of Indigenous Peoples cannot be separated from the health of their environment, the practice of their spirituality and the exercise of the right to self-determination, upon which the mental, physical and social health of indigenous communities is based.

Indigenous Peoples suffer some of the worst health and mortality rates in the world. In the North-eastern US and Canada, Mohawk women carry over 10,000 parts/million of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in their bodies, and pass this on to their infants in the womb and through their breast milk. Native infant mortality is double the national average, and poverty levels continue to be extremely high.

Suicide incidence among indigenous peoples is disturbingly high in Brazil, Alaska, Canada and other communities facing rapid change and loss of land and identity. The Uwa people in Colombia see collective suicide as an appropriate response to unwanted oil development in their territories, which threatens community integrity and well being.

The herbicide application program in Colombia, designed by the United States and Colombia to eradicate coca and poppy (as part of a multi-faceted anti-narcotics initiative known as "Plan Colombia"), is adversely impacting the health of the indigenous and the safety of their crops, livestock, water supply

and environment. These impacts are sufficiently severe to find that Plan Colombia violates indigenous rights to life, health, sustenance, food and property as well as the customary international right to a clean and healthy environment.

Numerous written, visual and oral data claim that humans in Colombia and Ecuador exposed to the spray mixture used for the aerial fumigation program in Colombia have complained of gastrointestinal disorders (including severe bleeding, nausea and vomiting), testicular inflammation, severe fever, dizziness, respiratory ailments, skin rashes and serious eye irritation after spraying has occurred. Reliable sources have also noted birth defects, miscarriages, deaths of infants and children.

Similarly, numerous written, visual and oral data indicate that exposure to the spray mixture used in the program to eradicate coca and poppy plants in Colombia has caused the eradication of yucca, corn, plantains, tomatoes, sugar cane, grass for livestock grazing, other legal crops, the destruction of fruit trees and the death of livestock. Exposure to the spray mixture has also contaminated water supplies and killed fish.

Despite the serious health risks posed by this programme, the United States and Colombian governments have failed to disclose the exact composition of the spray mixture; specific details about how and by what means the spraying occurs; nor given sufficient notice to the indigenous and other affected as to when spraying will occur and what advance preparation is necessary to assure safety.

The Inuit and other northern aboriginal peoples are concerned with the contamination of their food by persistent organic pollutants (POPs) most of which come from temperate and tropical lands and are transported to the Arctic. Inuits were also active in recent negotiations on the Treaty on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

### **National developments in recognising the rights of indigenous peoples**

The full benefits of these international standard-setting activities will be realised for indigenous peoples and communities, if these are adopted and enshrined in national constitutions and other legislative and administrative provisions. National laws, in a number of countries, have been changing to reflect contemporary norms of indigenous rights norms, in many Latin American countries, in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, the Philippines, Finland and Russia, to name but a few. The ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples has been signed by 14 countries. But the lack of recognition of indigenous peoples remains an obstacle in many countries in Asia and Africa.

### **Corporate globalisation and sustainability of indigenous communities**

The global ascendancy of neo-liberal economics and the entrenchment of corporate power in international and national affairs constitute a threat to society and nature. They have deepened inequalities between and within nations, and undermined efforts towards sustainable development.

The WTO TRIPS Agreement is an obstacle and threat to indigenous knowledge, through the harmonisation of uniform intellectual property rights regimes, and allows the patenting of life forms, for micro-organisms and non-biological and microbiological processes of production of plants and animals.

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture, which promotes export competition and import liberalisation, has allowed the entry of cheap agricultural products into Indigenous Peoples' communities, thereby compromising their sustainable agricultural practices, food security, health and cultures. Small-scale farm production is giving way to commercial cash-crop plantations further concentrating ancestral lands into the hands of a few agri-corporations and landlords. The conversion of small-scale farming to cash crop plantations has further caused the dislocation of many community members from rural to urban areas.

National legislation compliant with WTO agreements combined with the liberalisation of trade and investment regimes promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are undermining national legislation and regulations protecting indigenous rights and the environment.

Privatisation and structural adjustment bring both short and long-term negative impacts for Indigenous Peoples in developing countries, some of which are irreversible. The privatisation of water turns a sacred element essential to our agriculture-related spiritual practices into a privately-controlled commodity. Structural reforms are too heavy a burden for our communities to bear after centuries of imposed land appropriation and its resulting impoverishment, as well as accumulated damage to our ecosystems and to our rich but endangered agricultural practices and knowledge.

### **Recommendations**

The majority of specialized issues examined within the UN system in particular are integrally related to one another, and therefore require harmonization in both policy negotiation and implementation.

The Rio+10 agenda should therefore allow for action-oriented discussion to address the forces that have caused the CSD to take backward rather than forward steps toward sustainable development. Among those are globalization, privatization and the growing dominance of industry within the United Nations and global governance.



We look forward to a constructive phase of action towards achieving the sustainable development goals set out for the world community in 1992. We pray that it is a phase characterized by political will, and a true understanding of the inter-relatedness of all life forms, across many generations of life on Earth.

## Notes

- 1 Document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/14. Speech of Chief Oren Lyons to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations meeting in Geneva 1997, commemorating 20 years after the First International NGO Conference Against Discrimination of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas that was held in 1977, under the auspices of the Commission on Human Rights. That meeting was an important milestone in the struggles of indigenous peoples to highlight their issues on the international stage.
- 2 Tebtebba Foundation. "Highlights: International Conference on Conflict Resolution, Peace-Building, Sustainable Development and Indigenous Peoples" December 6-8, 2000.
- 3 Mindoro case study, Philippines Indigenous Peoples Links, December 2001.
- 4 Fergus Mackay. "Universal Rights or a Universe unto Itself?" Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights and the World Bank's Draft Operational Policy 4.10 on Indigenous Peoples Draft Discussion Paper 03 September 2001.
- 5 Howard Berman (1993) "The Development of International Recognition of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" in Document 74 IWGIA and the Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen.
- 6 African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous People/Communities in Africa, Cotonou, Benin, 6 November 2000. The mandate of the Working Group is described in the resolution as to: "examine the concept of indigenous people and communities in Africa; study the implications of the African Charter on Human Rights and well-being of indigenous communities especially with regard to: the right to equality (Articles 2 and 3), the right to dignity (Article 5), protection against domination (Article 19), on self-determination (Article 20) and the promotion of cultural development and identity (Article 22); [and to] consider appropriate recommendations for the monitoring and protection of the rights of indigenous communities."
- 7 The Report of the Secretary General on the progress made in implementing the Programme of Activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (A/54/487)
- 8 Mary Robinson "Bridging The Gap Between Human Rights And Development: From Normative Principles To Operational Relevance", Presidential Fellows Lecture, 3 December 2001, World Bank, Washington D.C.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Concluding Observations by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Australia, 24/03/2000. CERD/C/56/Misc.42/rev.3. (Concluding Observations/Comments)*, at para. 9.
- 11 Paul Oldham, (2001) "Negotiating Diversity: A Field Guide to the Decisions of COP5 of CBD", *ms.*
- 12 Marcus Colchester, Thematic Paper prepared for a workshop on 'Indigenous peoples, private sector natural resource, energy and mining companies and human rights' Organised by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 5-7, 2001.
- 13 Tom Griffiths, "Consolidating the Gains, Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Forest Policy Making at the United Nations," Forest Peoples Programme, December 2001.
- 14 Rosemary Kuptana, Inuit Circumpolar Conference, "ICC and Indigenous Economic Development", in Indigenous Peoples Production and Trade, Nordic Council of Minister, 1996
- 15 The Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT), "Traditional Agricultural Practices of the Indigenous Peoples of Northern Thailand", Chiangmai, 1998.
- 16 Mark Nuttall, "Indigenous Peoples And Climate Change Research in The Arctic", p.26 of this publication. □

## OBITUARY



Henning Siverts has died at the age of 73 after a one-year battle with cancer. Henning was one of the co-founders of IWGIA in 1968, and he served on the International Board of IWGIA until 1981. Henning graduated from the University of Oslo and joined the University of Bergen in 1959, where he worked at the Bergen Museum until his death on December 1, 2001. Early in his career, he served as a guest professor at Pomona College, California. Henning undertook his first fieldwork among the Maya people in Chiapas when still a student, and he was to pursue this work for almost 40 years. His focus was on Maya culture and social organisation, and on the social and cultural consequences of living within the wider Mexican society. He came to be highly respected for his work, both among the Maya and his colleagues. He also worked among the Jivaro in Alta Marañón, Peru, focusing on the changing ways in which Jivaro values could be achieved within a contact situation characterised by social transformation.

Both on account of his professional work and his personality, Henning took an enduring interest in IWGIA and in the cause of indigenous peoples. Colleagues and friends will miss Henning, his commitment, his friendliness and his willingness to share his great wealth of knowledge with others.

Georg Henriksen

By Mark Nuttall

# INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH IN THE ARCTIC



Humpback whales forage at the entrance of Narsik fjord. Photo: Kaupik Kivist

## Climate change and the Arctic

Climate variability and change and, more recently, notable increases in ultraviolet (UV) radiation, have become critically important environmental, social and political issues in the Arctic regions over the past few years. The Arctic has a history of sensitivity and vulnerability to climate change and scientific scenarios suggest that northern regions will experience a greater degree of change than countries in the tropics (e.g. Weller 2000). The results of scientific research and evidence from indigenous peoples have increasingly documented climatic changes that are more pronounced in the Arctic than in any other region of the world. Yet, although this indicates that the physical environment, as well as the flora and fauna, has been undergoing noticeable change, the impacts felt throughout the Arctic will be unique and will vary from region to region. Different climatic trends have been observed in different parts of the Arctic – while average temperatures in the North American western Arctic and Siberia have been increasing in the last 30 years (e.g. annual temperatures in the Canadian western Arctic have climbed by 1.5°C and those over the central Arctic have warmed by 0.5°C), temperatures in Canada's Hudson Bay and in Greenland, particularly in the Davis Strait area, have decreased (Chapman and Walsh 1993), suggesting that climate change involves global cooling as well as global warming.

If the scientific predictions and scenarios are realised, climate change will have a potentially devastat-

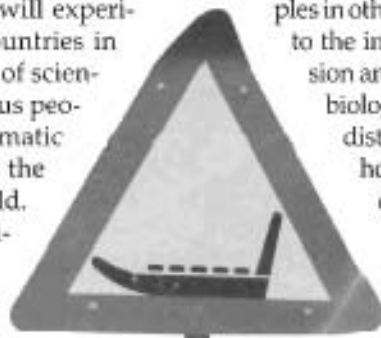
ing impact on the Arctic environment and on the peoples who live there, particularly indigenous peoples, whose livelihoods and cultures are inextricably linked to the Arctic environment and its wildlife. The most direct changes will be noticeable in the reduction of the extent of sea ice and permafrost, pronounced reductions in seasonal snow, and the disappearance of the existing glacier mass (Weller 2000). Scientists argue that over the last 100 years there has already been a significant reduction in Arctic ice cover extent and thickness. Since 1979 alone, the extent of sea ice throughout the Arctic has decreased by 0.35%, and record reductions of sea ice coverage were observed in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas in 1998 (Johannessen *et al.*, 1999, Maslanik *et al.*, 1999). Atmosphere-ocean climate models project a reduction in sea ice of around 60% in the next 50-100 years under a scenario in which CO<sub>2</sub> is doubled. Permafrost will thaw more quickly in spring, but take longer to refreeze in autumn, and permafrost boundaries will gradually move poleward, with most of the ice-rich discontinuous permafrost disappearing by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Such changes are likely to disrupt the migration routes of caribou, seals, whales, fish and geese – this will impact upon the hunting, trapping and fishing economies of many small, remote Arctic settlements. Many indigenous communities are already vulnerable to the ebb and flow of the global market economy, and are experiencing both the effects of other environmental problems (such as transboundary pollution) and the dislocation and social crises caused by rapid social and cultural change. The

Arctic's indigenous peoples, like marginalised rural peoples in other parts of the world, are thus doubly exposed to the impacts of climate change and to social exclusion and poverty. Although warming may increase biological production in some wildlife species, the distribution of many species crucial to the livelihoods and well-being of indigenous peoples could change. Important wetlands may disappear, or drainage patterns and tundra landscapes will be altered significantly, which could affect ducks and other waterfowl. Changes in terrestrial vegetation will have consequences for reindeer herd-

ing, subsistence lifestyles and agriculture. As the amount of sea ice decreases, seals, walrus, polar bears and other species that depend on it will suffer drastically, while changes in permafrost and hydrology will damage buildings and affect transportation infrastructure. All this will increase the likelihood of natural hazards for people, buildings, communication links and pipelines. Furthermore, climate change could also result in serious consequences for the health and well-being of indigenous peoples (DeFabo and Bjorn 2000).

At the same time, there will be economic benefits as well as social and economic costs. Opportunities to develop new trade links may arise as shipping routes



open up across an ice-free Arctic Ocean, the oil and gas industry would benefit from lower operational costs and tourists will find that access to previously remote and inaccessible places will be easier. The danger, however, is that these benefits will be reaped largely by powerful transnational corporations rather than by indigenous communities. True, increased development of non-renewable resources may promise jobs, money and prosperity, but there is an urgent need for indigenous peoples to participate in the planning processes for such development and to assess whether development in a climate-changed Arctic will ensure economic, cultural and environmental sustainability. If climate change is to alter the social, cultural and physical environments of the Arctic, then indigenous people must be assured that they will play a key role in the regional and global dialogues that will determine the kind of economic development that will take place in their homelands. For the most part, the scenario is one of an uncertain, unpredictable and unfamiliar future for indigenous peoples. Their livelihoods and cultures may well depend on their ability to adapt to climate change and to participate in the shaping of the new forms of economies, governance and livelihoods necessary to meet the challenge of climate change.

However, the Arctic environment and the livelihoods of indigenous peoples will not be changed or influenced by climate change alone – it is crucial that scientific climate change research does not develop scenarios of possible future states of the Arctic environment without putting people in the picture and taking rapid social, cultural, economic and demographic changes into account. The rest of this article is concerned with a critical discussion of one of the main climate change issues – facilitating the integration of indigenous knowledge into scientific climate change research and incorporating indigenous peoples into the development of adaptive strategies for a climate-changed future. Such active involvement of indigenous peoples in climate change research and international policy-making is a right of self-determination.

### **A changing world: indigenous accounts of climate change**

Claims for the changes likely to be experienced in the Arctic are based on current scientific research and broadly accepted climate change scenarios. However, despite the scientific evidence for present and future





Passengers go ashore in Qeqertarsuaq, Greenland. Photo: Maurice Berthelin



climate change, there remains scientific scepticism surrounding the substantive basis for sizeable global warming. Furthermore, climate change scenarios have been criticised as being seriously flawed while uncertainties remain about the workings of global greenhouse gas sources and sinks (WMO 1998). Scientific scepticism becomes a powerful ally for those governments and business interests for whom the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and other climate change negotiations means bad news in that economic activities and profits would be affected.

Yet changes to the Arctic environment are being observed and in many parts of the Arctic indigenous peoples are reporting that they are already experiencing the effects of climate change. In Canada's Nunavut Territory, Inuit hunters have noticed the thinning of sea ice and the appearance of birds not usually found in their region; Inupiat hunters in Alaska report that ice cellars are too warm to keep food frozen; Inuvialuit in the western Canadian Arctic report thunderstorms and lightning (a rare occurrence); Gwich'in Athabaskan people in Alaska have witnessed dramatic changes in weather, vegetation, and animal distribution patterns over the last 50 years or so; Sami reindeer herders in Norway have observed that prevailing winds relied on for navigation have shifted or that snow cannot be relied on to travel

Coast vessels in the harbour of Anaktuvuk, Greenland. Photo: Maurice Berthelin



over on trails that people have always used and considered safe.

While it is easy for scientists to dismiss these observations as anecdotal and not necessarily conclusive evidence of climate change, it can be argued that they are the type of phenomena that are entirely consistent with it. As indigenous peoples perceive it, the Arctic is becoming an environment at risk in the sense that sea ice is now unstable where hunters previously knew it to be safe, more dramatic weather patterns such as floods are occurring, vegetation cover is changing, and particular animals are no longer found in traditional hunting areas during specific seasons. The weather is becoming increasingly unpredictable, and local landscapes, seascapes and icescapes are becoming unfamiliar. The observations of indigenous peoples, together with their long-term knowledge of weather and climate conditions in the Arctic, should not be underestimated. Indigenous observations of climate changes both precede and corroborate scientific predictions for the region (e.g. Osterkamp and Romanovsky 1996). Indeed, indigenous knowledge of climate and weather can enhance scientific climate models, which have limitations in predicting local and regional changes.

It is also important to note that the Arctic has experienced significant climate change in the past – just as the global climate has changed historically in response to natural variations. The concern over climate change now is with its accelerated nature. Furthermore, the Arctic is not only being affected by climate change, it is also becoming a source of climate change. Parts of the Arctic that have already warmed are releasing, rather than storing, carbon dioxide from the tundra (about 14% of the world's total carbon is stored in frozen tundra soils), thus contributing to the global greenhouse effect. Climate change in the Arctic is critical to our understanding of global-scale climatic processes – it is being seen as the canary in the mine and an indication of what may be in store for the rest of the world. The uncertainty is to what extent global climate change is, on the one hand, the result of natural variability over years and decades and, on the other hand, how many global-scale climatic processes are indicators of long-term changes due to human activities. Penetrating, in-depth research and analysis on Arctic climate change is necessary before scientists can tell, with greater confidence, what future changes can be foreseen and which impacts on life in the Arctic may be expected. Adequate scenarios necessary for informing regional and global climate change negotiations and climate change-related policy cannot be developed without this kind of research. Discussions on these issues by concerned scientists, social scientists and indigenous peoples led to a formal proposal to the Arctic Council for a comprehensive Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). The Arctic Council is a high-level forum of the governments of the eight

Arctic states (USA, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia) and is charged with working out appropriate ways forward for environmental protection and sustainable development in the Arctic. The Arctic Council includes several indigenous peoples' organisations, such as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Sami Council and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North as permanent participants (Nuttall 2000). The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment was formally adopted and launched by the Arctic Council in October 2000. ACIA will be documented in three volumes due to be published in 2004:

- A scientific document (approx. 1000 pp.) comprising a series of assessment reviews and analyses that lead to an integrated understanding of climate change for the Arctic.
- A synthesis document which summarises the main findings of the assessment and places the state of our knowledge about the consequences of climate change over the entire Arctic region in a policy-makers' framework.
- A policy document which will relate the information from the synthesis and scientific documents to the policy needs of the Arctic Council and provide recommendations for follow-up measures.

ACIA will address the question of what strategies can be recommended to cope with and adapt to current and future environmental stresses, and possibly lessen the impacts of these changes in the climate and ultraviolet radiation. These recommendations will include advice relevant to national and international policy as well as advice to inhabitants of the Arctic. Of special concern to indigenous peoples are key chapters on indigenous perspectives on climate change (lead author, Henry Huntington) and on the impacts of climate change on the uses of living marine and terrestrial resources (lead author, Mark Nuttall). ACIA represents one of the most promising ways the Arctic Council can bring Arctic voices to the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) as well as the perspectives of indigenous peoples into global climate change negotiations.

### **ACIA and indigenous peoples: adapting to change**

Climate change is a social as well as an ecological issue – it has social, cultural and economic impacts and consequences. As the evidence from indigenous peoples indicates, climate change is having, or is widely feared to have, overwhelmingly negative consequences. Over the last two hundred years or so, indigenous peoples in the Arctic have demonstrated an incredible resilience in the face of colonisation, forced



© 1997 Arctic Council, Greenland Photo: Knud Einar

resettlement and rapid culture change. However, climate change brings an altogether different sense of uncertainty and different kinds of threats. ACIA is an impact assessment and it is crucial to the Arctic's indigenous peoples that the final report and policy documents should stress the impacts (both positive and negative) climate change has had, is having, and will have on people. An immediate policy response should be for the Arctic states to agree on adaptation measures. This will be entirely consistent with recent findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which emphasise the need for societies to adapt and be flexible in the face of the uncertainties surrounding climate change. However, while there is general agreement that indigenous peoples will experience quite possibly devastating impacts as a result of change, the precise nature of these impacts is poorly understood. There is an urgency to improve our understanding of how a changing climate will affect indigenous peoples in the Arctic and how they can best adapt to it. Adaptation involves not only taking action to minimize the negative impacts of climate change, but also knowing how to take advantage of the new opportunities that may arise.

The perspectives of indigenous peoples should not just be complementary to the input of the natural sciences, but should be fully integrated into the ACIA process. Many Arctic societies have experienced climate change (some of it quite severe) in the past and some are well-documented examples of how people can deal with uncertainty and change. As such, indigenous peoples' knowledge and experience of climate change is important for developing strategies of adaptation. Effective dialogue between ACIA lead authors must centre on how best to integrate natural and social science contributions and the observations from indigenous peoples that will demonstrate the impact of the interac-

tions of climate, human development and socio-economic processes and institutions on the environment. By examining these complex interactions, we will be in a far better position to assess how the sustainability of local livelihoods, cultures and economies could be affected by climate changes that may impact upon land use practices, vegetation cover, terrestrial ecosystems, agricultural productivity and marine resource use. Understanding these linkages will greatly enhance the scientific, environmental, social, economic and practical knowledge bases necessary for defining and assessing policy options, adaptation strategies, human choices and the assessment of risk within the context of regional and global change. The relevance of ACIA, of course, is not limited to the circumpolar North but points to the importance of understanding the social, cultural, political, institutional and economic pressures that act as driving forces of climate change in broader regional and global terms. It will also have significance for other parts of the world in terms of the way it can provide a model for how co-operation between different interest groups can be facilitated, and a model for how best to respond to climate change and prepare for its impacts.

### **Building the capacity for indigenous peoples to carry out scientific research**

There is another crucial aspect about ACIA in that it presents the scientific community with a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate how researchers can forge collaborative partnerships across disciplines, as well as with indigenous peoples. ACIA can be an effective way of integrating the environmental knowledge of the Arctic's indigenous peoples and involving them as key participants in the project. In this way, ACIA will be seen as a successful model for future assessments not



The mountain "Serwitkoo" seen from the harbour of Nuuk. Photo: Kenneth Alund

only in the Arctic but in other regions likely to experience pronounced climate change.

For example, scientific research on climate change in the Arctic that focuses only on the quantitative aspects may greatly enhance our understanding of, say, the climatic and environmental consequences of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, but such research is nonetheless limited unless it also involves social scientists and the perspectives of indigenous peoples and considers the social, economic and political processes that both affect the emissions and are affected by climate change. A thorough analysis of the complex and multifaceted interactions and feedback mechanisms involved in climate change will place the scientific quantifications of changes in greenhouse gas emissions and their impacts into a wider social, economic and political perspective. Complementing the pure scientific work, social scientists concerned with understanding the causes and consequences of climate change would typically focus on a range of issues, such as resource use practices and the human modification of the environment, and the roles that cultural and institutional processes play in local and regional decisions about land use and management. Such interdisciplinary research not only enhances understanding of the complex interface between human societies and the environment, it has greater policy relevance.

To be effective, ACIA must involve (and must ultimately have relevance for) local people, different groups of stakeholders who live in the Arctic (defined as residents, resource managers and policy-makers), as well as members of interest groups who live outside the Arctic but who are likely to be concerned with and affected by the climate changes happening there. Indigenous peoples are represented on the ACIA steering committee, through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, and the project

is making progress in organising workshops with IPOs and indigenous residents. The integration of local people's knowledge about climate change can augment and enrich scientific knowledge, but climate change impact studies must not only look at local systems of environmental knowledge but local management regimes and local adaptive strategies as well. They should examine patterns of change in local production systems, and determine whether those changes are the result of climatic factors, technological innovations or fluctuations in human population dynamics and ecosystem interactions. It may well be useful for ACIA to use insights from indigenous perspectives that do not view the environment in materialistic terms but which focus on social agency, human intention, action and purpose in economic production. In this way, ACIA may well contribute to a greater understanding of how people conceptualise their own relationships with their environments and how this conceptualisation informs and underpins the kinds of choices people make with regard to land/marine use and resource management.

Climate impact assessment studies require researchers to work with local people at community level and seek to understand how they view the potential impact of current resource use practices on climate. At local, regional and national level, it is also crucial to identify the extent to which decision-makers and policy-makers are concerned with considering the opportunity costs and benefits of focusing attention on climate change issues. However, attitudes to climate change and appropriate policy responses are likely to be contested, and the attitudes and agendas of various interest groups and stakeholders in each study need to be understood. By bringing together local people, policymakers, scientists and social scientists, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment is working out ways of developing a truly participatory approach to the environmental, social and economic dimensions of climate change. In doing so, researchers are beginning to reach a greater understanding of how local people interpret and understand climate change in terms of their own systems of environmental knowledge, social values and cultural practices.

### **Scenarios for vulnerability and adaptation analysis: involving indigenous perspectives**

As scientists develop appropriate multidisciplinary (and interdisciplinary) methodologies to study the impact of climate change on Arctic ecosystems and societies, current climate impact assessment models have particular limitations and are far from being entirely reliable in their representation of social, economic and cultural processes. Climate change scenarios are coherent, consistent and plausible descriptions of possible future states of the world (Carter *et al.* 1994), not predictions or forecasts. Scientists involved in climate change research



in the Arctic have well-developed climate change scenarios based on knowledge of how the physical world changes and how plants, animals and ecosystems may react to climate change. Socio-economic scenarios are vital for the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, and yet are poorly developed and inadequate. Integrated assessment models of climate change may provide thorough descriptions of cause and effect situations and of the interactions between social and physical processes, yet these are simplified representations of complex relationships. It will not be possible for the Arctic Council nor the governments of the various Arctic states to know what a climate-changed Arctic will actually be like for indigenous peoples unless there is a compelling description of what indigenous societies will be like and what indigenous livelihoods will be like. It is a commonplace remark (indeed, one that this paper repeats) that indigenous peoples are vulnerable to climate change – yet we cannot know exactly the nature of this vulnerability without having an understanding or insight into what the future socio-economic conditions and circumstances of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic are going to be.

Socio-economic scenarios will provide storylines of the future, but must be built on baseline data of past and present circumstances. This kind of baseline data is vital for developing scenarios for vulnerability and adaptation analysis. But if coherent and plausible scenarios for the future are to be developed then there needs to be sufficient input from indigenous peoples in the storylines and projections. While indigenous knowledge of such processes as rapid changes in ocean circulation may be limited, nonetheless scientific estimates of climate change can be improved by incorporating indigenous observations on the natural variability of climate. An example of how this process can be developed is a conference on climate change organised by Nunavut Tunngavik in March 2001. This conference brought together eighteen elders from across Nunavut to explore their personal observations and experiences of climate change and to suggest policy recommendations for the Nunavut government. More workshops like this are needed throughout the Arctic.

Although there has been considerable recent scientific research on the environmental consequences of climate change in the Arctic, very little attention has been given to the potential social and economic impacts and how local people perceive, interpret and understand climate change as it affects the environments on which they depend for social well-being and cultural survival. The aim of scientific research on climate change in the Arctic should be to inform and advise governments and policy-makers about the need to adapt and prepare for growing uncertainties and climate impacts during the next few decades. The best hope for scientific research is for indigenous peoples to be included in climate change projects. The best hope for indigenous peoples is for this research to stress the urgent need for governments and policy-



Harvested walrus. Photo: Knut Rind

makers to recognise the social and cultural impacts climate change is likely to have, and for them to act positively on the findings.

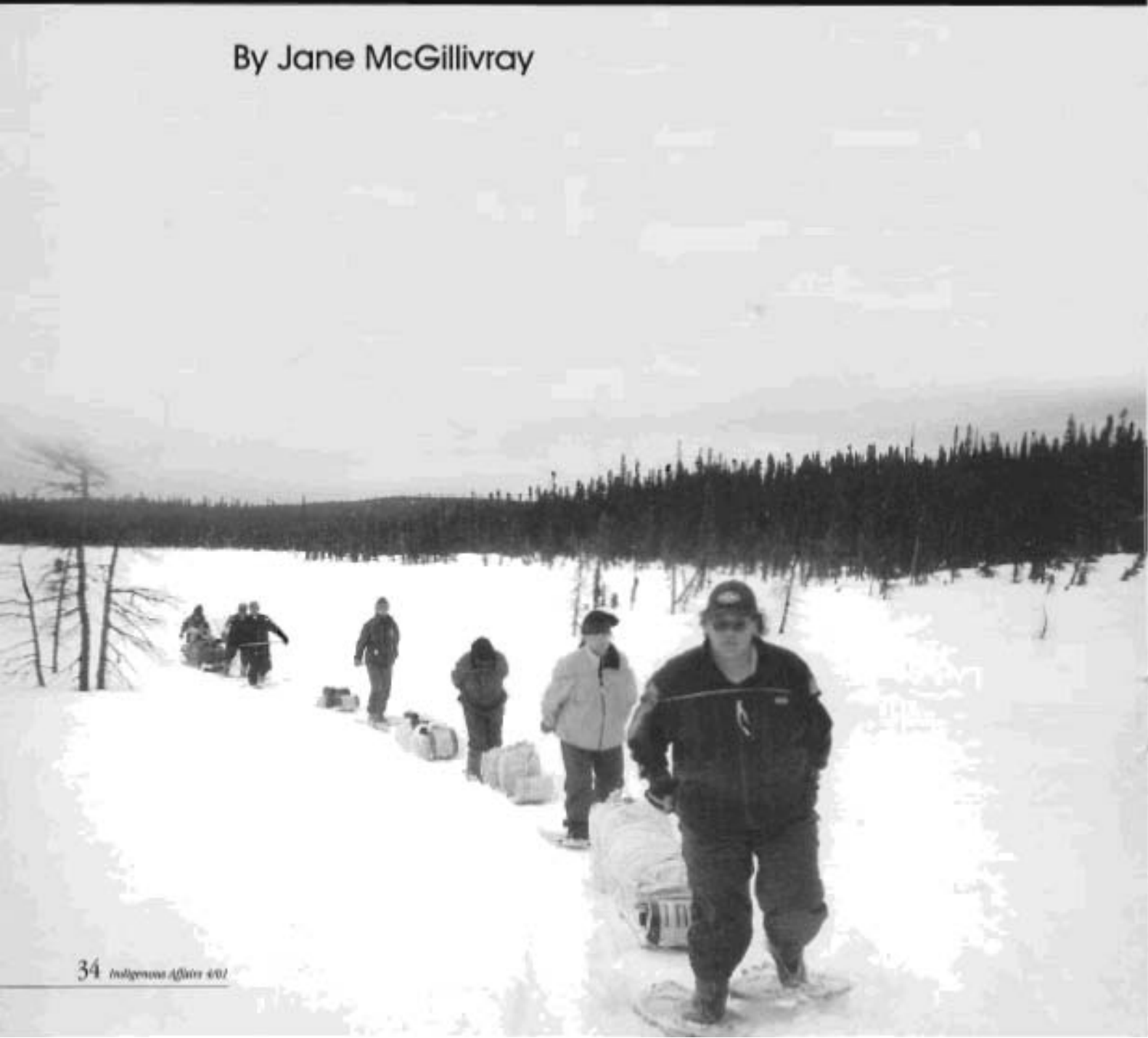
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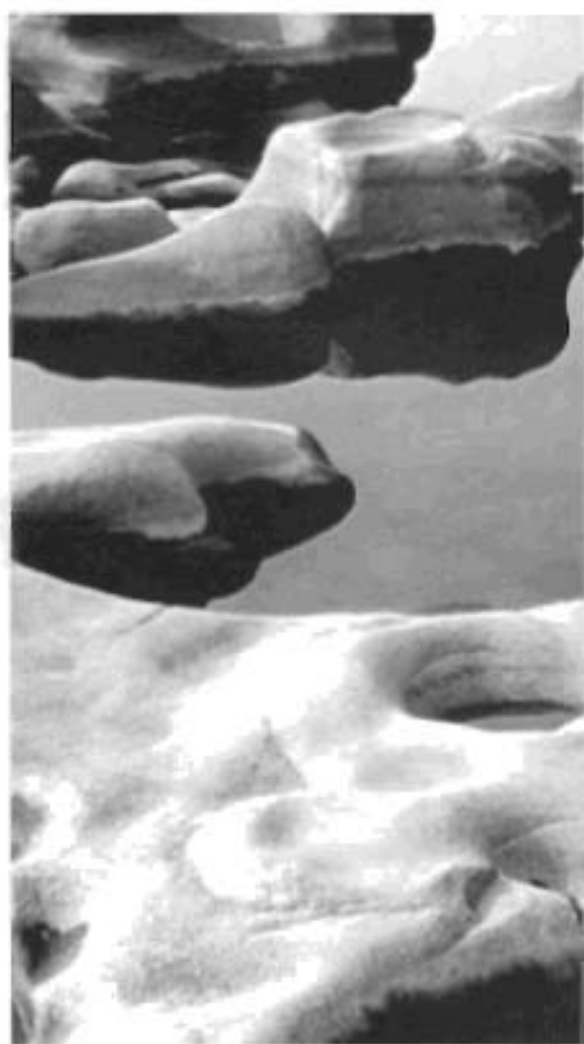
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# Elizabeth's Walk- Tshakuesh's Meshkanu

By Jane McGillivray





I have just returned from a week of walking with Elizabeth Penashue in the Mealy Mountains in Labrador. She is a 57 year-old Innu woman, mother and grandmother. She has asked me to be a messenger for her, to tell people both locally and if possible around the country, about her walk and why she is doing it. Her walk, ongoing at this moment, will likely continue for another two weeks, about three and a half weeks in total. The destination is Minonipi Lake, which is the head waters for several water sheds, and Elizabeth's family's traditional spring hunting grounds. It is 170 miles south west of Sheshatshiu. This is the fourth year that she has walked in the spring.

Perhaps with the many tragic events that have come to light in the Innu communities, it is also the most poignant.

Elizabeth talks about growing up in the country, and walking and paddling, living without skidoos and other high technologies, and without all of the government handouts. She remembers her people working hard, having good food and laughing and being happy, and taking good care of each other. She believes that the people in her community and, indeed, perhaps everywhere, need to reconsider the direction that their lives are taking. We all need to think about what is healthy and good, and what is not. And more than just THINK about it, we need to ACT on it. Her ACTION, is her WALK. In Innu language, a "path" is called a *Meshkanu*. She speaks about making a good path for the future, "a good Meshkanu". Her Walk is this path.

Elizabeth knows that it does not take a lot of money to quietly go walking. The skills to survive can be re-learned and rediscovered and passed on to the young people. She knows that her *Meshkanu*, as simple as it may seem, is a path that creates a healthy life just simply by choosing to walk along it. It is the process of walking and living along this path that brings balance and perspective. It heals both the body and the spirit, and is available to everyone who has the courage to begin the first step and keep going. It is also not expensive or fancy. She is not funded by the Innu Band Council or the Innu Nation or the Federal or Provincial Governments. She has had some small but very helpful donations, to buy basic food staples like flour and sugar and tea.

She began her walk with several people. Her son, Jack, and two granddaughters, Megan and Jenna, who are both 10 years old and her grandson, Cree, who is 3. Shinipest and Tony

Penashue and Philip Rich are three wonderful strong young men who are helping to break the trail and hunt for food, hauling heavy sleds as they go. There is Erin as well, (who has been renamed Irwin or Irene by her travelling companions), a white woman who is an anthropology/divinity student studying at Harvard.

Elizabeth believes that her people need to know that they can still be strong and resourceful and capable. She wants everyone to know that they are able to move on their land, under their own steam, like they always have. She knows that when she started her walk four years ago she needed to re-learn some things that she had forgotten, but each year it becomes easier. She becomes stronger, and more committed to what she is doing.

She also remembers her older sister, Mani-Aten Andrew, who also tried to make this kind of "good path" before she died. She is very thankful for her sister's spirit, which helps to encourage her. Elizabeth also thanks the Creator for giving her one more beautiful day, each day, as it unfolds its gifts.

She wants to tell people three things that she knows are important (these are her words, paraphrased, as well as I can remember them):

1. Elizabeth wants everyone to know that the land, Ntissenan, is precious just as it is. It is NOT valuable because it can be flooded (Churchill River Hydro Development), mined (Voisey Bay), or used as low-level military flight range. It is NOT valuable because the trees can be cut down commercially. Cutting the trees down hurts the land. She wants people to know that this land is precious because it gives people everything they need to live and become healthy again. There are porcupine, beaver, partridge to eat each day. There is beautiful clean water. There are many trees for setting up camp and for fire wood. Each day is soaked in breathtaking beauty.
2. She wants people to know that they can be healthy and become strong by walking and working. She wants people to know that the land will give them what they need. She believes that people will be restored to health both physically (by working and hunting) and spiritually, by knowing that the land is abundant and giving. She wants us to know that we are capable of living with all of the challenges that come up each day.
3. She also believes that, by walking, life is slowed down to a pace in which there is the time to NOTICE. To really NOTICE. There is the quality of time to pay attention to the snow, the trees, the animals, the wind and the sunlight. She believes that paying attention to all of these gifts of abundance makes people brim full in their hearts with gratitude and respect.

On this walk, people are mostly walking with snowshoes, hauling heavy toboggans with all of the gear. (When I was out there, I took my dogs and dog sled and

cross country skis.) The camp is generally set up each night. Every third day or so is a rest day for drying out and hunting for more meat, storing energy.

The tent is a large canvas affair about 10x12 feet and high enough for a person to stand up in the middle. It has no floor by design, so each time it is set up, spruce bows are collected from the woods and woven to make a soft, warm, beautiful smelling layer of insulation between the snow and us. There is a stove, a tin box, about 1x1x2 feet in dimension with a stove pipe going through a hole in the side of the tent wall. This stove easily heats up the whole tent, so that it is warm and able to dry out all of the wet clothes from a day's expedition, and to cook on. Of course, it is fuelled by the dry wood all around in the forest, so there is an endless supply of fuel. The tent poles are not carried each day but are made from the forest with each camp.

Elizabeth's walk is along the Traverspine River (called *Wabushh Shipushish* in Innu - which translates as Rabbit Brook). This river feeds into the south shore of the Churchill River. The distance walked is expected to be about 150 miles in all. The people are travelling about 10-15 miles a day. The snow is seemingly bottomless. To walk off of the path without snow shoes is nearly impossible. I have floundered my way out of more than several snow holes after sinking up to my neck. This "snow hole" is an experience that everyone should have at least once in life. To be honest, I would usually spend so much time falling from one snow hole into another while the camp was being set up, that all of the work would be done by the time I had finished my personal expedition.

While travelling through the country, the men hunt porcupine and partridge. Porcupine preparation is a very interesting process and deserves an entire manual to describe it adequately... and out on the path, it tastes divine. Jack and Elizabeth would tell you that porcupine are like Innu Power Bars... instant energy fixes. Also a kind trapper gave us a beaver on the first day of the walk, so we had a wonderful feast of beaver meat as well, early on.

It is also VERY hard work walking along the steeply inclined paths that lead up from the river to the extensive marshes that are walked along each day. I had MANY experiences when my dogs and myself would be strenuously hauling the now-million pound sled up a hill. I might be braced around a tree, Hannah and Nanook looking over at me shaking their dog heads, sled precariously perched on a knoll, inches away from sliding back all the way from where we had struggled to come. And then, having made it, well, at least over that one hill, though no guarantees about the next one, lying face up staring through the evergreen to the brilliant blue, completely, momentarily, exhausted, and yet brimming full of this amazing adventure.

Each day, snow is melted over the stove to make water for drinking. On those struggling moments on the trail, thirsty beyond remembering, and lying in the snow, I am continually reminded of how life, water, energy, flows through me, and, indeed, through each of us. When we are challenged and open, the life forces, whether it is food from the porcupine or water from the snow or brook, wash through us, and wash us clean. This is, I think, how the earth heals us.

I write all of these details because there has been such negative press and tragic images of the Innu struggle in community life. There is also the questionable path of "institutional healing", with "trained professionals" of one sort or another. Elizabeth Penashue is trying to show that there is another, very important, healing story to tell. There is another healing path, a good *Meshkanu* to walk... and we must all be responsible for nurturing and supporting and encouraging this path, and then learning to walk this path ourselves.

The days I have just spent on Elizabeth's walk have been gorgeous and simple. There are no fancy "therapists", no millions of dollars of buildings, no person who is the "healer" while every one assumes some lesser, weakened role. The days are filled with humour... hilarious, ridiculous contrasts. Like Sexy Leopard Motif bed sheets on bulky foam mattresses beside high-tech therma-rests...(my therma-rest developed a serious bulging tumour en route, by the way). There is one example after another of what works and what doesn't work. There is the hilarity of realizing how we cling to one piece of junk and then

another, as we slowly learn to let them go. Erin (Irwin) and I began a list of the "expendable expenditures", as item after item of high tech, velcroed, gortexed, breathable, waterproofed essential outdoor-wear bit the dust, often melted and leaking, mottled and deformed, making it onto our expendable list. What works when living in a walking process, and what does not work, becomes clear very quickly. Having to haul the weight of one's choices quickly makes a person decide what they can dump, gleefully, to lighten the load.

Form follows function. I would not be surprised to discover, in some future analysis, that the traditional Innu life is the highest bio-regional technology possible in this land. These traditional technologies are extremely important in learning to live, again, a sustainable, mutually enhancing and respectful path on this gentle, exquisite land.

Elizabeth's walk is hard and challenging but, even more, and very importantly, it is full of JOY. There are happy humans living, and being grateful, NOTICING the beauty and the abundance that is there for us any time we have the courage to go out and meet it...

I hope that you can share this message about Elizabeth's walk.

Thank you.

*Jane McGillivray works with the Mani Ashini Health Center, Friends of Grand River* □



Photo: IWGMA archive

# DECENTRALIZATION, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

By Robert K. Hitchcock



Over the past two decades, community-based natural resource management programs have emerged in various parts of the world as a means of coping with two major issues: (1) a reduction in biodiversity, and (2) the need for human populations to reduce poverty, expand incomes and raise their standards of living. Community-based natural resource management programs attempt to integrate conservation and development in order to enhance environmental quality, promote the protection of species and secure the livelihoods of local people.

Some of the key features of these kinds of integrated conservation and development programs include the channeling of benefits to people from natural resources and the participation of local people in decision-making. In order to achieve these objectives, governments of nation-states must devolve authority and control over natural resources to lower-level institutions. One of the areas in the world in which this process has occurred is southern Africa, taken here to mean those countries in Africa south of the Congo River, many of which belong to the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Although the southern African states have, in many cases, made significant strides toward achieving many of their national development objectives, including economic growth, environmental protection and ex-



panded social and physical infrastructure, they still face a number of problems. These problems range from warfare and social insecurity to inequality in access to land and income and increased competition for resources. Nearly half of the region's people, particularly those in rural and peri-urban areas, live in poverty.

In 1999, an estimated 40 percent of the rural population of southern Africa derived at least a portion of its subsistence and income from agriculture and natural resources. Agriculture is a risky activity in some parts of the region. Water is a limiting factor in many areas, and the variability in the timing, distribution and amounts of rainfall must be considered carefully by farmers and planners. Soils, too, are marginal in many areas. In order to overcome some of the problems facing local people in southern Africa, it has been recommended that greater use be made of natural resources, especially wildlife. The term wildlife is used here in its broadest sense, taken to mean mammals, birds, fish, vertebrates, invertebrates and other life forms.

### Previous policies

Prior to independence in southern African states, environmental planning and coordination of environmental and development issues across sectors and regions was minimal. Under colonial rule, the legal use of wildlife was the exclusive privilege of white residents. In addition, a sizable portion of the region's land (some 15%) was set aside as national parks, game reserves and conservation areas, and local people were not allowed to reside in or utilize resources in these areas. Southern African government officials enforced rigid conservation laws, frequently putting people in jail or fining them for exploiting resources. As a result, local people were alienated from the very resources on which they depended and which were socially, economically and ritually significant.

The situation was exacerbated by resettlement policies that saw large numbers of people moved onto marginal land, with attendant problems of overexploitation of resources and land use conflicts. As a consequence, the attitudes of local people towards the colonial government's policies on natural resources management generally were negative. Many people felt that conservation was not in their interests and that there were no incentives for responsible resource management. In some areas, poaching and other forms of illegal resource procurement took place on a fairly regular basis.

Recognizing that the previous enforcement policies had not been very effective, wildlife and national parks ministries in the region attempted to improve relationships with local populations by returning limited benefits to communities through the provision of meat from animals that were culled or which were killed because of the problems they caused, as was the case, for example,

with elephants that raided people's fields or lions that killed their livestock. This was characterized as a "wildlife management for the people" strategy, and it had some positive effects from an economic standpoint. But it was generally a top-down system, and it was insufficient in terms of increasing incomes and broadening socio-economic development for local people.

### A new approach

Over the past two decades, a number of non-government organizations and donor agencies have provided support to southern African states to promote community-based natural resource management. Funding has been provided by multilateral institutions such as the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) of the World Bank and bilateral agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and SNV, the Netherlands Development Organization.

A key feature of the community-based natural resource management policies that have been put in place in southern African states since the mid- to-late 1980s is that of extending the right to use and manage natural resources to people who reside in communal (tribal) areas. The empowerment of communities through the restoration of their resource management rights and the devolution of control of resources from the state to lower-order institutions is central to the community-based natural resource management approach. Communities require appropriate control over and access to benefits derived from the exploitation and protection of natural resources if they are to engage more directly in conservation and development activities.

In order to make community-based natural resource management and local-level development possible, communities often need skills in management, administration, organization and finance. Various agencies and non-government organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund-US (WWF), the Worldwide Fund for Nature (Switzerland) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) have helped implement various kinds of community-based natural resource management projects in southern Africa. Zimbabwe Trust, for example, has worked with local Ndebele and Tyua (San) communities in the western part of Matabeleland Province in Zimbabwe, while the Kalahari Conservation Society (KCS) has helped four local communities in the Nata River region of north-eastern Botswana establish a nature sanctuary that protects unique habitats and breeding areas for a variety of water-dependent birds such as flamingos and pelicans.

A number of lessons have been learned from these activities. The first is that, for natural resource management and conservation to be successful, there must be broad participation on the part of local people. The second is that representative management bodies must



Photo: Robert K. Hitchcock



Photo: IWGIA archive



Photo: Karen B. Andersen

be created that are accountable to a wide range of interest groups and stakeholders. A third lesson is that co-management systems can work as long as there is close cooperation and consultation between local communities and government institutions and a willingness among all parties to negotiate and reach a consensus as to how best to manage the resources. A fourth lesson is that joint venture agreements, in which communities enter into contractual relationships with private sector partners, often do not result in much in the way of transfer of skills to community members, although they do help expand incomes, job opportunities and access to goods such as meat.

In order to become effective, non-government organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs) must improve their institutional capacity in a variety of organizational spheres. These include (a) the capacity to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate development activities; (b) the establishment of sound, transparent and clear financial management and reporting procedures; (c) the setting up and running of participatory and effective management structures; and (d) the ability to assess impacts and analyze data that is then integrated into decision-making.

There are a number of advantages in working directly with community-based organizations and members of local communities. First of all, community members have been involved in the management of natural resources for generations and thus have extensive knowledge of strategies that can be built upon in community-based natural resource management programs. Second, discussions with community members allow for feedback to occur, thus enabling government ministries, NGO team members, community institutions and local people to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of each other's ideas and approaches. Third, understanding the dynamics of user groups and leadership in local communities enables governments and NGOs to work out more effective methods of consultation and communication.

### Namibia on the forefront

Namibia has developed an innovative approach to community-based natural resource management. In communal areas in Namibia, conservancies have been established in which local communities have the right to utilize their resources and to limit access to the use of their resources by outsiders. Under Namibian government wildlife legislation, a conservancy consists of a group of people who have agreed to put their human resources to work for the purpose of conserving and utilizing natural resources and who have formed a conservancy council. The members of the conservancy have the right to utilize resources within the conservancy's boundaries for the benefit of the community. They also have the right to enter into business arrangements with private companies or individuals and to control and derive benefits from tourism and other resource use activities.

Once the conservancies have met the various requirements, the Namibian government grants conservancy sta-





San from Botswana.  
Photo: Frans Walman / WIP

tus to them. After that, the conservancies have the right to the wildlife quota for their areas, which they can use as they see fit.

In Namibia, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism embarked on an assessment process, which was aimed at determining potential target areas for community-based natural resource management activities and conservancy formation. As part of this assessment process, a number of criteria were delineated, aimed at helping to determine whether or not interventions were appropriate for a particular community. These criteria are as follows:

- 1.- Homogeneity of the population,
- 2.- Number of potential beneficiaries,
- 3.- Number of institutions ready for community-based natural resource management,
- 4.- Viability of the wildlife resource base,
- 5.- Time frame for the establishment conservancies,
- 6.- Livestock competing with wildlife,
- 7.- Tourism potential, and
- 8.- Income-generating potential from natural sources.

Efforts are made, in the course of doing the work on communities, to come up with an inventory of relatively high-potential areas in order to help prioritize field and community work. Criteria for decision-making include the following:

- 1.- human potential,
- 2.- habitat potential,

- 3.- wildlife potential, and
- 4.- tourism potential.

*Human potential* relates to the degree to which community members cooperate on issues, cohesiveness of community membership, willingness of community leaders to respond to the needs of constituents and the ability of local institutions to deal with NRM issues. *Habitat potential* relates to the capacity of the vegetation, water, soil, and nutrient resource base to support animal populations as well as the potential for revenue generation. *Wildlife potential* relates to the potential numbers, densities and reproductive viability of wild fauna. *Tourism potential* refers to the degree to which areas contain natural and cultural resources of interest to tourists and which provide economic benefits. These criteria can be used to help planners in the process of determining which areas should receive priority attention. At the same time, they can also be used to show areas that, although they might exhibit low potential, should receive attention in order to ensure a balance in the community development work.

While the Namibian conservancy legislation did not directly address certain key issues of land tenure, local governance and migration, it did confer on communities in communal lands (1) the right to utilize wildlife on the designated conservancy land and retain revenues from such usage; (2) the right to the tourism resources on conservancy land; (3) the right to negotiate with the private sector as legal proprietors for any lease or contractual arrangements for the use of wildlife and other tourism resources; and (4) the responsi-

bilities of representative, effective and sustainable natural resource use and management.

The conferring of these rights and responsibilities over natural resources in conservancies has already produced a quantum leap in the magnitude of benefits returned to communities from natural resource use, both financial and motivational. A listing of communal area conservancies in Namibia is provided in Table 1. The idea behind these programs is that revenue flows to communities will expand considerably from those negotiated by benevolent outside agents to levels dictated by the market. This has been the case, for example, in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, the oldest of the Namibian communal conservancies, which was established in January-February, 1998. In the case of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, which is some 9,003 sq km in size, the conservancy was able to generate some N\$260,000 in the past year, dividends from which went to the members of the conservancy who are all Ju/'hoansi San (Bushmen). In addition, the 730 new game animals, such as hartebeest, gemsbok, springbok and eland, were translocated to the Nyae Nyae area and released, thus expanding the biodiversity in the area, a strategy that promises to increase the tourism potential of Nyae Nyae.

### Community-based tourism programs

The Southern African Development Community and the organizations with which it works recognize the fact that tourism is one of southern Africa's fastest growing industries. Tourism thus represents a key means of promoting social and economic development. A major advantage to tourism promotion, besides economic benefits, is that it can provide people with incentives to conserve wildlife and other natural resources. If community-based tourism is to be successful in southern Africa, people at the local level have to have proprietary rights over natural resources.

In Namibia, there are over 30 community-based tourism programs that have been established in various parts of the country. These programs range from campsites run by communities such as the Omatako Valley Rest Camp in Tsumkwe District West, which is run by !Xun San, to culturally significant sites that includes guides who show tourists around and who provide them with information on the importance of

what they are seeing, as is the case, for example, at Twyfelfontein, a site where there are petroglyphs (pecked rock engravings). The Kxoe San of West Caprivi in northern Namibia established a community campsite on the Okavango River near Popa Falls, which is generating income for the communities there.

### Critical aspect for initiating change

Judging from experience in Namibia and other southern African countries, the most critical aspect of initiating change in rural communities is the presence of strong and active communication channels that facilitate the easy flow of information from the bottom up and, conversely, from the top down. Formalization of the communication channels and use of appropriate approaches to extending messages is necessary. Information flow is facilitated through discussions and through contacts with people living and working in communities.

Empowerment efforts require open channels of communication and devolution of decision-making power to grassroots levels. Particular efforts must be paid to the needs and ideas of the poorest and most marginalized sectors of the various communities, since it is these people who often have little, if any, voice in public policy decisions. This is the case, for example, with rural women, ethnic minorities, children, the elderly and the incapacitated. One of the problems that has occurred in the community-based natural management projects in Namibia and elsewhere is that, in some cases, the benefits such as jobs that come about as a result of natural resource-related activities tend to go to a small percentage of the people in the communities involved, many of whom tend to be adult males. One way to get around this problem is to focus on natural resources that women tend to exploit, such as items used in craft manufacture (e.g. ostrich eggshell beads, palms used to make baskets, and grasses used for thatching, which some people sell in order to gain income). Thus, it is important for community-based natural resource management projects to focus not just on wild animals but also on wild plants, some of which have considerable commercial as well as spiritual value. It is also important to ensure that efforts are made to promote equity in job-creation and training of local people.

*!Xosho women engaged in manufacturing work in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy in northeastern Namibia. Photo: Robert K. Hitchcock*



### **Policy on community-based natural resource management in Botswana**

Botswana's community-based natural resource management program was officially endorsed in 1986, with the approval of the *Wildlife Conservation Policy* (Republic of Botswana 1986). The right to decentralize wildlife management was legislated in 1992 with the passage of the *Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act* (Republic of Botswana 1992). The challenge facing Botswana over the past two decades has been to come up

with workable methods for implementing the *Wildlife Conservation Policy* and the *National Parks Act*.

The current wildlife policy of Botswana empowers the Department of Wildlife and National Parks to work out arrangements with local communities and district authorities on how the wildlife resources within their areas will be handled. Communities in what are known as "Wildlife Management Areas", which make up approximately half of the land in the country, are able to gain proprietorship over wildlife resources in Community-Controlled Hunting Areas, sub-sections of Wild-

life Management Areas. There are a number of these community-controlled hunting areas in north-western Botswana, which are in and around the Okavango Delta, a huge wetland that is the largest Ramsar (wetland of international significance) site in the world. There are also a number of Community-Controlled Hunting Areas along the Botswana-Namibia border, in which conservation and development projects are being implemented (for a list of some of the registered community trusts that exist in north-western Botswana, along with comparative data on two conservancies in Namibia, see Table 2).

### Experiences with community projects

In Botswana, there are over 50 community-based natural resource management projects, a number of which have a tourism component. The basic assumption behind these efforts is that people will not attempt to conserve resources unless they can see the economic and social utility of doing so. When people are able to derive both direct and indirect benefits from the consumptive and non-consumptive use of resources, they are more likely to engage in activities that enhance the well-being of those resources.

An important strategy that has been used to good effect in North West District (also known as Ngamiland) is to set up community trusts. Such work is being done, for example, by the Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiatives (TOCADI) in the Dobe area of western Ngamiland, an area that is populated primarily by Ju/'hoansi San and Herero. In this case, TOCADI, with some financial support from the Kalahari Peoples Fund, was able to drill several boreholes in traditional Ju/'hoan *nloresi* (territories). Several groups that have *nloresi* in the Dobe area have come together and are seeking to establish a trust so that they can gain the rights over the Dobe area and utilize the resources there for their own purposes and for commercial tourism operations.

Community-based natural resource management does not, and cannot under the law in Botswana, promote community ownership of either wildlife or veld products. The only way a community can obtain ownership rights over land and natural resources is to purchase freehold land, something that is impossible for most rural residents, who generally lack sufficient cash to pay for the land. One alternative is to get donor agencies to provide assistance in purchasing land, something that was done in the case of the Dqae Qare Game Farm in Ghanzi District, which was supported by the Dutch government and SNV Botswana.

### Problems in implementation

The North West District Council and the Ghanzi District Council, and the NGOs working in these two districts, have found that it was not as easy as had been originally hoped to raise incomes and create employment for rural people in north-western and western Botswana. One reason for this situation was that there were relatively few extension workers in remote areas who could assist people through provision of advice or information. Many remote area households lacked access to sufficient land to meet their needs, and they also lacked the technology necessary to enable them to plough and produce crops.

Another reason why it has been difficult to implement some of the natural resource management activities is that the District Councils, or the central government in some cases, have decided not to allow local activities to take place. This was the case, for example, in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, where hundreds of people were removed from their ancestral areas in 1997 and more recently. While the communities still in the reserve have attempted to remain there and to argue for the establishment of "communal use zones" in which they have residential rights and rights to natural resources, the government and the Ghanzi District Council have taken the position that people should leave the game reserve and move into large settlements on the peripheries of the reserve.

A prevailing assumption in some circles was that rural communities were incapable of managing projects on their own. The danger of such an assumption is that it could be used as an argument to deny people their rights to land and development assistance. Discussions with rural people reveal that virtually all communities had individuals who they respected and whose suggestions they chose frequently to abide by. They also had community members who managed land and other resources.

### Important indigenous knowledge and management capacity

Among the Ju/'hoansi San, the traditional leaders and land managers were known as *ni ore kxausi*. In some communities, such as /Xai/Xai and Dobe in western Ngamiland, which have a majority Ju/'hoan population, the *nlore kxausi* have played important roles in helping to come up with land use and development plans. The *nlore kxausi* were also interviewed during the process that led to the establishment of the /Xai/Xai Tlhabololo Trust, which was founded in October, 1997. The /Xai/Xai (CgaeCgae) Tlhabololo Trust is a community-based organization that has several goals. First,



it has as a goal the enhancement of the well-being of the people of /Xai/Xai, a village of some 350 people on the Botswana-Namibia border. Second, the Trust aims at diversifying the economy of the people of /Xai/Xai by expanding craft production and marketing, tourism, small-scale business (vending) and food production. Third, the Trust hopes to promote biodiversity conservation in the /Xai/Xai area. It also concentrates on preserving cultural traditions and raising the awareness of the general public about the Ju/'hoansi' and Mbanderu's unique ways of life.

The /Xai/Xai Tlhabololo Trust is a representative and accountable management body that has a board, a constitution and a set of officers (Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer). All of the adult members of the community are members of the Trust. Elections for the Trust Board are held every five years. The Trust has its own bank account, from which it pays lease fees when it enters into lease agreements with private sector operators, such as safari companies.

Technical assistance is provided to the /Xai/Xai Trust by the /Xai/Xai Community-Based Natural Resource Management Project, a joint government of Botswana - SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) effort that began in 1994. A producer unit of the trust is !Kokoro Crafts, a 60-member group comprised mainly of Ju/'hoan and Mbanderu women that manufactures and sells handicrafts to tourists and to craft outlets.

In 1997, the /Xai/Xai Trust was allocated the wildlife quota for Community-Controlled Hunting Areas NG 4 and NG 5 by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, an area that is 16,966 sq km in size. It is estimated that over 250,000 Pula were generated in /Xai/Xai in the late 1990s. In the early part of the new millennium, the /Xai/Xai Trust stood to earn as much as 1 million Pula from a safari operator who was bringing hunters and tourists into the area (the exchange rate for the Pula was US\$1 - P5.50 in 2001). In addition, 24 people were employed, and the members of the /Xai/Xai community received food, blankets and medicines as part of the benefits provided to the people in exchange for the joint venture agreement with the safari operator.

The Ju/'hoansi San are widely acknowledged to be highly knowledgeable about environmental management matters. They possess extensive indigenous knowledge about the various natural resources in the habitats in which they live. The Ju/'hoansi are excellent trackers, and they have a detailed understanding of the habits of wild animals. They are even believed to have symbiotic relationships with birds such as the greater honeyguide, which, they say, leads them to colonies of African honey bees. As a consequence of their understanding of their environments and their ability to get along with each other and with their neighbors, the Ju/'hoansi have managed to sustain themselves and to adapt successfully to change over time in what some consider to be harsh conditions in the northern Kalahari Desert.



San girls, Botswana. Photo: Arthur Kramberg

## Land registration

Some San in Botswana have sought to register land and gain title over it. In order to do this, they have gone through adjudication processes, those legal steps whereby decisions are made about claims to land (e.g. determining prior claims). This is similar to a kind of title search in contemporary real estate law. Regularization of land includes establishing areas that are recognized legally. In order to do this, careful surveys must be done of areas that take into account both customary and legal claims to land.

The primary way that people obtained land and water in the past in western Botswana was through self-allocation. There were also cases where San approached headmen and chiefs in the hopes of being granted land for residential, arable or grazing purposes. All too often, these efforts were unsuccessful. After the passage of the *Tribal Land Act*, which came into effect in Botswana in 1970, people were supposed to apply to the land board or, in the case of arable and residential plots, to the sub-land board. In order to further their claims, some individuals have mapped the areas that they wished to apply for. Having maps available has sometimes led to positive reactions on the part of the land boards.

In some instances, as in the case of the Dobe area and the Ncwaagom areas in Ngamiland, the mapping exercises have enabled local groups to participate extensively in the identification and demarcation of their

traditional areas. The impacts of these efforts range from enhanced knowledge of the groups' resources and history to greater degrees of social political cohesion. They have not yet, however, resulted in the formal recognition of the land and resource rights of the communities in these areas. As a result, community trusts continue to be dependent on the Botswana government.

In spite of the constraints, innovative development activities have been initiated in a number of the communities in the Wildlife Management Areas of Botswana. It is estimated that a total of 2,290,000 pula in cash went to community-based organizations that were involved in joint venture agreements in 1999. The problem with these programs, however, was that the community members received little more than cash in the trust bank accounts and, in some cases, jobs. There was relatively little in the way of skills transfer, and community members did not have much, if any, control over decision-making concerning the activities that took place in their areas.

## A step backwards

Unfortunately, in Botswana, the government has taken a step backwards when it comes to community-based natural resource management. In January, 2001, the government's Ministry of Local Government issued what, in Botswana, is known as a "savingsgram", which essentially took away the rights of community

trusts to manage their own funds that were generated through community-based natural resource management activities. The Botswana government's position was that the natural resources, like minerals, should be for the nation as a whole and not just for individual communities. A second argument that the government gave was that only a few people benefit from the funds generated by community-based natural resource management projects. Third, the government argued that there was, in some instances, mishandling of funds. Finally, the government said that the jobs that were generated in community-based natural resource management projects were being reserved for people in the trusts and were not available to people from the outside.

The decision was made by the Botswana government that the funds earned from these community-based natural resource management projects should be managed in trust by the District Councils. This decision is reminiscent of what has happened with the CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources) program in Zimba-

bwe, where Regional Councils and District Councils have captured many of the funds that were being generated by communities engaged in community-based natural resource management. It is unclear as of late 2001 whether or not the decision by the Botswana government will be reversed. If it is not, much of the progress made in community-based natural resource management and local level conservation and development will be affected negatively, and communities will have lost many of the gains that they had made.

## Conclusions

Analysis of the various community-based natural resource management projects in southern Africa indicates that sustainable development can only be achieved if careful attention is paid to the state of the resource base, there is full participation of local people in planning and decision-making, an equitable distribution of

*Ju/'hoan man in the Tsodilo Hills, Botswana, now a World Heritage Site, making a quiver for sale to tourists. Photo: Robert K. Hitchcock*



Table 1. Communal Area Conservancies in Namibia

Name	Region of Conservancy	Habitat Type	Founding Date	Size (sq km)	Number of members
Nyae Nyae	Otjozondjupa	savanna woodland	Feb 1998	9,003	752
Salambala	Caprivi	woodland	June, 1998	930	1,982
Torra	Kunene	desert	June, 1998	3,522	330
=Khoadi //hoas	Kunene	desert - savanna	June, 1998	3,366	1,400
Uibasen	Kunene	desert	December, 1999	400	64
Doro INawas	Kunene	desert - savanna	December, 1999	4,073	1,400
Kwandu	Caprivi	woodland	December, 1999	100	1,800
Mayui	Caprivi	woodland	December, 1999	151	
Wuparo	Caprivi	woodland	December, 1999	148	1,700
Purros	Kunene	desert	May, 2000	3,568	77
N=a Jaqna	Otjozondjupa	savanna woodland	pending	8,457	1,344
N = 11 conservancies	3 regions			33,718 sq km	11,259

Note: Data obtained from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), Namibia

benefits from the projects, and the use of multifaceted community-based extension and natural resource management approaches.

It is critical that sufficient time and resources be provided for communities to develop the necessary skills and institutional capacity to undertake new community-based natural resource management approaches. The success of experimental models will depend in part on whether sustained investment of human and financial resources will be available for community-based management prototypes to reach maturity and to be replicable. Success will also depend on the kinds of approaches being employed, with the assumption that the more participatory the approach, the better.

Rather than have joint venture agreements in which the private sector partner makes many of the decisions and the community mainly gets money, jobs and goods, it would be useful to have joint venture partnerships in

which both sides, the private operators and the community trusts, share both responsibilities and risks. Community-based projects that are run entirely by community members, all of whom get direct benefits, would be ideal. Efforts to incorporate indigenous environmental knowledge and management practices into community-based natural resource management will ensure that community members will be more willing to engage in conservation and development projects. Given the lessons from the community-based natural resource management projects in southern Africa, it is clear that a much more decentralized approach, in which communities have rights and greater control over resources and decision-making, is needed. Unless these steps are taken, communities in southern Africa will continue to be dependent on higher-order institutions, including district councils and government ministries, and community self-sufficiency will not have been achieved.



**Table 2. Community Trusts in Botswana's North West District and Namibia's Tsumkwe District That Are Involved in Conservation and Development Activities**

Name of Trust and Founding Date	Controlled Hunting Area, Size (sq km)	Composition of Population, Size	Project Activities
Jakotsha Community Trust, 1999	NG 24, 530 sq km	Mbukushu, Herero and G//anikwe San, 10,000 people	community tourism, makoro (canoe) poling, basketry and other craft sales
Khwaai Community Trust, 2000	NG 18, 1,815 sq km and NG 19, 180 sq km	Bugakwe San, Tawana, and Subiya, 360 people	ecotourism, craft sales, work at safari lodges, auctioning off of a portion of the hunting quota
Mababe Community Trust, 1998	NG 41, 2,045 sq km	Tsegakhwe San, 400 people	ecotourism, leased out some of the hunting quota to a safari company
N= a Jaqna Conservancy	Tsumkwe District West, 8,457 sq km	!Xun, Mpungu, and Vasekela San, 4,500 people	ecotourism, community-based campsite at Omatako Valley
Nyae Nyae Conservancy	Nyae Nyae area, Tsumkwe District East, 9,003 sq km	Ju/'hoansi San, 2,200 people	community-based tourism and safari hunting
Sankuyo Tshwaragano Management Trust (STMT), 1995	NG 34,870 sq km	Bayeei and Basubiya, 345 people	ecotourism, safari hunting concession, craft sales
Teemashane Community Trust, 1999	NG 10 and NG 11, ca. 800 sq km	Mbukushu, Bayei, Bugakwe San, G//anikwe San, 5,000 people	community tourism, campsite, cultural trail, craft sales
/Xai/Xai Tihabololo Trust, 1997	NG 4, 9,293 sq km, NG 5, 7,623 sq km (16,966 sq km total)	Ju/'hoansi San, Mbanderu, 400 people	leasing out of portion of quota, crafts, community tourism

*Note: Data obtained from the Natural Resources Management Project, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWN?), SNV Botswana, the World Wildlife Fund and the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WILMSA)*

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*This is a slightly edited version of a paper presented in a symposium entitled "Decentralization and New Environmental Institutions: Contingency, Uncertainty, and New Paradigms of Knowledge", organized by Anne Ferguson and William Derman during the 100<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), Washington, D.C., November 28 - December 2, 2001. In the original paper, a comprehensive reference list is included, which can be obtained by contacting Marianne Jensen (mj@iwgia.org).* □

# The Sahara's Indigenous Peoples, the Tuareg, Fear Environmental Catastrophe

*An old Tuareg guide examining old Tifingh inscriptions - the written script of the Tuareg language Tamazek*



More or less in the centre of the Sahara desert, there are people who do not welcome unreservedly the possibility of an end to the political instability and violence that has been a feature of Algeria since the army annulled the results of the general election held at the beginning of 1992. That election would have brought to power the world's first democratically elected Islamist government. This group of people are not terrorists, militant Islamic fundamentalists, some sort of Waco-styled cult, or new age anarchists. Rather, they are the Kel Ahaggar and Kel Ajjer (*Kel = people of*) Tuareg, whose traditional homes are the central Saharan massif of Ahaggar and the adjoining Tassili-n-Ajjer plateau in southern Algeria. This is not to suggest that they condone either Islamic fundamentalism or the violence that, in the last decade, has led to the deaths of some 100,000 people in northern Algeria. On the contrary, they simply fear that an "outbreak" of political stability will lead to a regeneration of tourism and a consequent environmental catastrophe in their large corner of the Sahara.

### The Tuareg: the indigenous peoples of the Sahara

The Tuareg are the indigenous peoples of much of the central and south central Sahara. They are Berbers, not Arabs, and by tradition are nomadic pastoralists. The southern Tuareg of Niger and Mali number some one million and 675,000 respectively. The northern Tuareg, who inhabit the regions of Ahaggar and the Tassili-n-Ajjer in Algeria and the adjoining area of southwest Libya around the ancient town of Ghat, are relatively few in number. According to recent language surveys, there are only some 25,000 Tamahak speakers (the language of the Tuareg) in the regions of Ahaggar and Ajjer: 20,000 in Ahaggar and 5,000 in Ajjer. Since Algerian Independence in 1962, most Kel Ahaggar have settled in the many small villages and cultivation centres of Ahaggar, or even in the main town of Tamanrasset. Most Kel Ajjer have been settled for a little longer in Djanet and the few other small villages in the Tassili. It is estimated that approximately 3,000 Kel Ahaggar have managed to retain their nomadic lifestyle. However, although the Kel Ahaggar and Kel Ajjer comprise only 0.1% of Algeria's national population, their traditional lands, which now fall within the administrative regions (*wilayas*) of Tamanrasset and Illizi, cover about 20% of national territory. That is an area about the size of France.

### The world's greatest collection of prehistoric rock art

Ahaggar, which rises to almost 10,000 feet in Mt Tahat - the highest mountain in Algeria - and the surrounding Tassili ranges have long attracted Europeans. The region's unique geology and almost surreal landscapes of recent volcanoes and grotesque lava flows overlying some of the oldest (pre-Cambrian) rocks in the world, its flora and fauna, and the nomadic culture of the legendary blue-veiled warriors of the Sahara - the Tuareg - have made the region one of the world's most exciting and visually dramatic tourist destinations.

But above all else, the region is famous for being the site of the greatest concentration of prehistoric rock art in the world. Tens of thousands of engravings and paintings take us back through time: to the proto-historic forebears of the Tuareg; the flying chariots of the Garamantes civilisation (900BC-500 AD), whose influence spread far across the Sahara from their capital of Gerama in the Fezzan; earlier Paleo-Berbers, bovidien and other cultures, whose paintings and engravings can be dated back to 8,000BP - and before that, the "Round-head" people - so-called because of the style of their art - who date back to the end of the last Ice Age, some 12,000 years ago, and perhaps even earlier. This magnificent natural art gallery was acclaimed by its European discoverers



The Tuareg territory and its main towns



Land over 2000 meters with names of the main masses



Distribution of prehistoric rock art: Engravings (darker spots), Paintings (lighter spots)

some fifty years ago as the greatest collection of prehistoric art in the world. The global significance of this cultural heritage was recognised in 1984 by UNESCO's designation of the Tassili-n-Ajjer as a World Heritage Site. Three years later, the Algerian government decreed the whole of Ahaggar as a National Park.

### The growth of tourism

After the difficult years of the 1960s, when a combination of drought and Algeria's new socialist policies brought the traditional nomadic economy to its knees, tourism gradually increased to the extent that, by the end of the 1980s, as many as 15,000 foreign tourists a year were visiting Ahaggar and the Tassili-n-Ajjer. Although this number may not sound large compared with other international tourism destinations, it is significant by "Saharan standards", and especially so when it is remembered that Algeria is a country that has never actively encouraged tourism.

The Kel Ahaggar and Kel Ajjer have long recognised the value of tourism to their economies and to the maintenance of their culture. It provides them with the opportunity to develop their own tourism agencies, to rent their camels and to work as cameleers, drivers, guides and cooks. Indeed, the intimate relationship between nomadism and tourism is such that Tuareg now have a saying: "Without nomadism there is no tourism, and without tourism there is no nomadism." We can therefore conclude that tourism was generally recognised as being beneficial for the region and its peoples. However, by the 1980s this conclusion was beginning to be questioned: a growing number of local people were beginning to realise that the way in which tourism was developing in the region was putting increasing stress on its fragile environment. Their concerns were well-founded: by the end of the 1980s, the region was exhibiting some of the worst features of mass tourism, notably, serious environmental degradation, including significant and irreversible damage to rock art sites.

### Environmental degradation and the destruction of rock art

There are many causes and agents of damage to rock art in Ahaggar and Ajjer. The two most prevalent are associated with tourism and the increasing influx into the region of what local people generally refer to as *les gens du nord* (the people of the North). In the last twenty or so years, and especially since the onset of Algeria's "crisis" in 1992, Algeria's extreme south

has experienced what the Tuareg regard as an "invasion" of people from the north. Most of these people are government functionaries or attached to the military, and most of them are young and seen by the Tuareg as being generally ignorant and disrespectful of local culture. This invasion from the north is reflected in the growth of Tamanrasset from around 40,000 at the beginning of the 1990s to about 100,000 by the end of the decade. These "new arrivals" are responsible for most of the Arabic scrawling and graffiti that has defaced many of the rock faces in and around prehistoric sites of rock art and also at local "beauty" spots. For example, the rock walls of the gorges of Imlaoulaouene, a favourite tourism site and recognised beauty spot close to Tamanrasset, have been totally desecrated in the last few years by painted and charcoal Arabic graffiti.

The most serious damage to the Sahara's rock art, however, comes from tourism. The French ethnologist, Henri Lhote, who discovered and publicised the Tassili rock paintings in the 1950s<sup>1</sup> set the trend for damaging the paintings by recommending that they be washed with water in order to enhance their colour. Although this practice is now strictly forbidden, for we now know that the moistening of paintings upsets the physical, chemical and biological balance of both the images and the supporting rock, many photographers still throw water on paintings to enhance their colour. Visitors to the Tassili looking for the frescoes reproduced by Lhote less than fifty years ago now find that several are nothing more than a pale reflection of their former glory, while others have disappeared altogether. Irreversible damage has been caused by tourists, collectors, "researchers", photographers and other such visitors doing precisely what Lhote advocated.<sup>2</sup> Many paintings and rock-art sites have also been severely damaged by graffiti, daubing of paint, charcoal and other substances, and the actual chiselling out of "souvenirs" of rock art from the rock faces. Even worse are the rogue tour operators and local traders who encourage local people to collect such specimens on their behalf, and the illicit dealers who have a ready market for prehistoric rock art and other such antiquities amongst private collectors in European and other countries.

### **Plans for an alternative, environmentally sustainable tourism**

In spite of the Algerian government's introduction of strict legislation prohibiting the removal of any natural or cultural object from the Tassili and Hoggar National Parks without licence, and the highly publicised arrest of a prominent archaeologist for taking a number of such artefacts from the region, the 1980s witnessed an increasing amount of environmental damage – much of it irreversible – to the region. By the end of the 1980s, the nature of tourism development in Ahaggar and Ajjer was becoming so potentially damaging to the

region's environment that a major international conference, attended by seventy-five participants from sixteen countries, was held in Tamanrasset in November 1989 to formulate policies and draw up plans for an alternative, environmentally sustainable form of tourism. One of the conference's proposals was to establish in Tamanrasset an international centre for sustainable and responsible tourism.

The policies advocated at the Tamanrasset Conference were quickly consigned to history as the onset of Algeria's crisis in 1992 brought a complete cessation of tourism to the region. Tourist numbers immediately fell from around 15,000 per year to almost none.

### **A decade of isolation**

The region's isolation during the 1990s was exacerbated by its being sandwiched between Libya, Niger and Mali. While Libya remained effectively closed to tourists because of international sanctions until the latter part of the 1990s, Algeria's border areas with both Niger and Mali became effective "no-go" areas for foreign travellers as a result of Tuareg unrest in both Niger and Mali, followed by the more recent establishment of GIA "training" camps to the south of the borders, the incursions into Algeria of heavily armed "bandits" and consequent hot pursuit "shoot-ups".

The result of this isolation was that many parts of Ahaggar and Tassili did not see a single foreign visitor throughout the 1990s. For example, at the little village of Mertoutek in the Tefedest range, a favourite spot for foreign tourists, not a single person checked in at the local National Park office from October 1993 until December 1999. At Djanet, all eighty Park wardens of the Tassili Park were laid off. In Tamanrasset, nearly all of the 40 or so tourist agencies closed their doors. By 1999-2000, less than ten remained nominally in business, with only about half of these being in a position to handle more than a handful of tourists. The impact on the surrounding nomadic population would have been devastating if it had not been for the government's astute policy towards the Hoggar National Park. Rather than laying off Park employees, the number of employees, mostly Kel Ahaggar designated as "conservation agents" or "Guardians of the Park", as they called themselves, were increased. By September 2000, they numbered 550. Although many people in the region are highly critical of the Park's management for failing to protect the region from the sort of environmental degradation described above, its employment policy, which in practice is little more than a "social security" policy, has certainly saved the nomadic elements of the region from being driven into severe poverty, with all that would have meant for political unrest.

The initiative for the Tamanrasset conference of 1989 came from the local tour operators themselves who, earlier in the year, had formed themselves into a



Representations of the "myth" of Tawakal at Ishdrek (near Djaza)



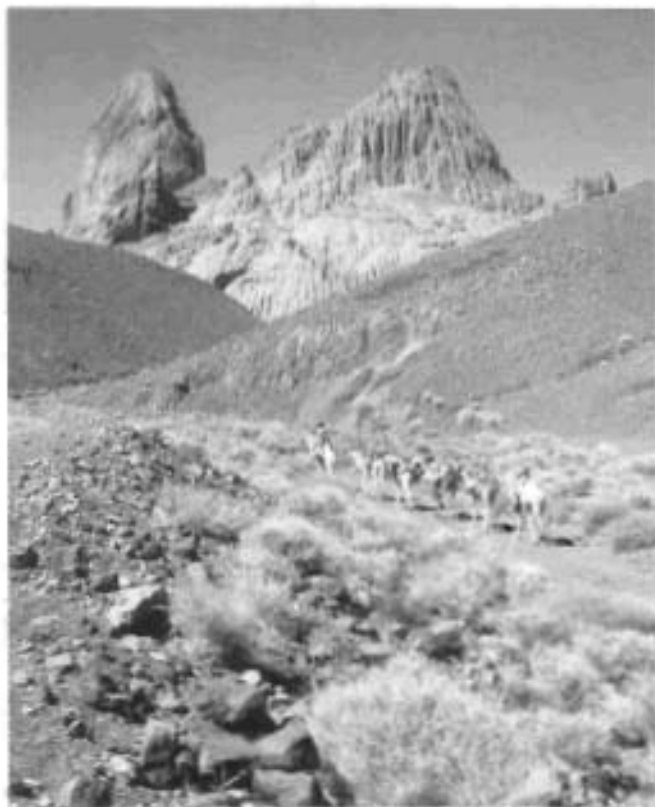
Painting of Tawakal in the Central Tawakal-Ajjer damaged with child marks



The famous painting "The Great God of Sefir", near Djaza in the Tawakal-Ajjer



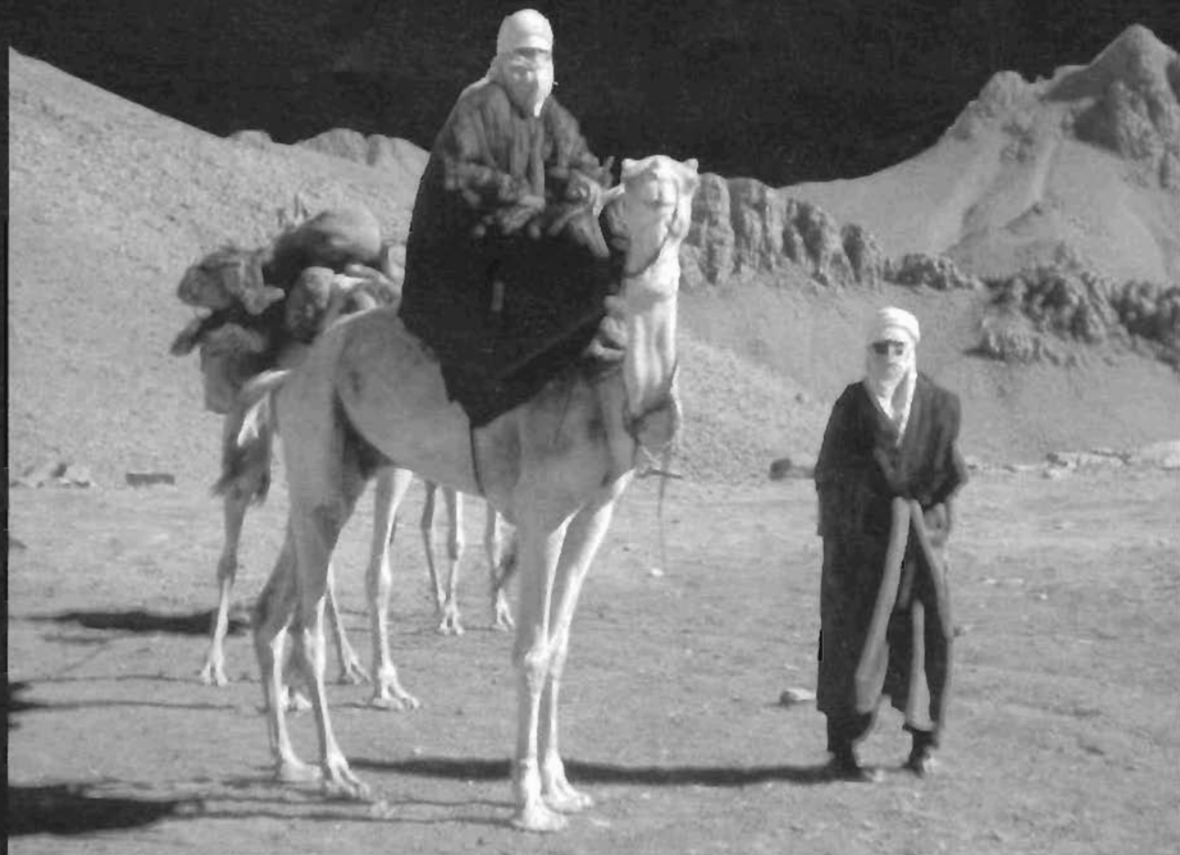
A group of Tawakal sitting outside a cave with two hairies



Tawakal working with camels - carrying baggage for tourists trekking in Atgagga



Tawakal examining a rock shelter or Tawakal (Central Tawakal-Ajjer) for any damage to the paintings, which are depicted on the roof of the shelter



*Tuareg (Kel Ahaggar) riding through the high mountains of Ahaggar in the 1960s. The place is Assekrem (ca. 8,500 ft. altitude). Today, this same spot is the site of a large concrete and stone tourist rest-house.*

local organisation: The *Association des Agences de Tourisme Wilaya de Tamanrasset (ATAWT)*. Having seen what degradation mass tourism could bring to Ahaggar and the Tassili, they set themselves up to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the region by promoting instead *un tourisme alternatif* (alternative tourism). During the next two years they spread their message through the adjoining regions of southern Algeria, and in 1991 the *Union Nationale des Associations des Agences de Tourisme et du Voyage du Tourisme Alternatif (UNATA)* was established. The Tamanrasset international conference in 1989 drew a metaphorical line in the sand. Unfortunately, the conference's fine words and well thought out programmes, along with the proposal to establish in Tamanrasset an international centre for sustainable and responsible tourism, were overtaken by Algeria's political crisis and the complete collapse of tourism in the region. Instead of trying to put their plans into action, members of ATAWT and UNATA spent seven years (1992-1999) with little to do but reflect on what sort of tourism they wanted to see being developed in the region when political stability and security returned to Algeria. These long empty years hardened their thinking. Not only did they have to suffer an almost complete loss of income, but they had all the time in the world to see all around them the irreversible damage that had been inflicted on the region by mass tourism. The names and dates scratched or painted in German, French, Italian and, all too often, Arabic on the rock faces of prehistoric shelters stared back at them. And the message of the graffiti and chiselled rock faces was clear and simple: a few more years of such damage and there will be no such cultural heritage left for tourists to come and see.

### **Regeneration of tourism and fears of renewed environmental damage**

The appointment of Abdelaziz Bouteflika as the country's new President in March 1999 was met with a cautious sense of optimism that the country's "crisis" might soon be resolved. This more optimistic mood was reflected in a trickle of foreign tourists venturing into the region. By the end of the year, some 900 tourists had visited Tamanrasset. By July 2000, official figures suggested the number might have risen to as many as 2,000. Was the trickle about to become a flood?

In spite of all the efforts of ATAWT and UNATA, it was soon clear that tourism in the region was about to be redeveloped along exactly the same lines as in the late 1980s. The local tourism agencies sent an urgent appeal to the authorities, pointing out the damage that a resumption of charter flights and cheap cut-price package tours would have on the region. Their pleas fell on stony ground. The government was interested only in boosting the number of foreign visitors to the region in order to show that Algeria had become a

"normal" country again. By the middle of 2001, government figures (almost certainly massaged) claimed that 8,000 tourists had visited the region in the 2000-2001 tourism season. But this last tourism season has signified quite clearly that tourism is not simply redeveloping where it left off a decade earlier. On the contrary, this redevelopment, encouraged by both the government's use of tourism statistics as an index of returning to "normality", the pressures of unscrupulous European tour operators (mostly French, German and Swiss) and businesses desperate to make up for the lean times of the last decade, is along even more rapacious and less sustainable lines.

### **The lack of government planning and local consultation**

The government, preoccupied by its troubles in the north, has no long-term strategic development plan for the region, nor has it consulted with local people on such matters. Rather, the signing of a *Partenariat* agreement between the French and Algerian governments on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2001; plans for new hotels; the encouragement of evermore charter flights (although not in themselves bad); and the failure of the Management and Direction of the National Park, are all indicative of the absence of any strategic planning, either short or long-term. On the contrary, all the signs are pointing towards a headlong rush to the sort of mass tourism that has led to an environmental disaster in the bordering Acacus region of Libya. There, over the 2000-2001 tourist season, 45,000 tourists were reported to have visited the region. Preliminary reports from local archaeologists indicate that some forty rock art sites were vandalised or looted.

The absence of tourism in the Algerian Sahara during the 1990s merely gave some respite from the threat of the environmental catastrophe that is once again threatening the region.<sup>3</sup> However, while the threat may not have changed, the political climate in which it is now being perceived is very different from that of the late 1980s.

### **The emergence of a new political climate in the South**

Since the 1980s, the South, especially Tamanrasset itself, has been "invaded" by *les gens du nord*. In general, local people, especially the Tuareg, see these "northerners" as being not only disrespectful of their culture and heritage but directly responsible for much of the damage being inflicted on the local environment. Local people have noted that the graffiti that defaces the rock art sites is now written predominantly in Arabic. Moreover, these "outsiders" are perceived as muscling in on a business that Tuareg have always regarded as falling within their traditional "domain", by setting up unregistered tour agencies. These "rogue" operators are not



only undercutting the traditional, more established and responsible local agencies but are encouraging the development of a cheap, mass tourism market, which is undermining the attempts of the ATAWT to develop environmentally sustainable tourism.

The perception of these "northerners" by local people, especially the Tuareg, is reflected in their nomenclature for them. The term commonly used by Tuareg, other than the French expression *gens du nord*, is *Chinouï/Chnaoui*, from the French *chinois* – Chinese<sup>1</sup>. The explanation that the Tuareg give for calling northerners "Chinese" is because "they are white and behave like foreigners". In similar vein, when northerners come to the region as tourists they are not referred to as *Chinouï/Chnaoui* but as *Taiwan* because "they are like the cheap spare parts made in Taiwan, compared to the expensive, original, quality spare parts – namely European tourists".

In addition to the problem posed by this "invasion" from the north, the government itself and its agencies, which tend to be staffed by northerners, are said "not to listen" to local concerns. This is reflected in the government's general lack of consultation with local people both on issues that are of concern to them, such as the way in which tourism is redeveloping, and in the appointment of local government administrators, who appear to be disinterested in and even hostile to such concerns. Indeed, the government and the "North" are being perceived increasingly by local people, notably the Tuareg, as being part of the problem rather than the solution. This increasing resentment of the government was reflected in the public demonstrations that greeted President Bouteflika on his visit to the region in the summer of 2001. To his credit, he dismissed the Illizi wali<sup>2</sup> from office and is believed to have censured the wali for Tamanrasset.

These factors are all contributing to the new and complex political currents that are sweeping almost imperceptibly through the south of the country, and which have contributed noticeably over the last few years to a new sense of regional awareness amongst the local population<sup>3</sup>. This new sense of regionalism is paralleled by an increased sense of patrimony amongst the Tuareg towards the region's cultural heritage and especially its rock art.

## Conclusion

Five years of tourism in Ahaggar and the Tassili-n-Ajjer on the scale seen in Libya's Acacus region in the last few years could lead to the destruction in Algeria of one of the world's greatest heritages. If that is allowed to happen, the implications for Algeria will be serious in that it will be held responsible for such a catastrophe by both its own citizens and the international community. Indeed, in the present political climate of the country's southern regions, such a strategy would be reckless and asking for trouble: local people are now

only too well aware that even a "little" political unrest can bring tourism to a halt.

It is hoped that the government does not allow such an inflammatory situation to develop, and that it will take up the cudgels of the 1989 Tamanrasset conference and take the lead in the development of an environmentally sustainable tourism in the central Sahara that could become a showpiece to the world.

## Postscript – Towards a solution

The problems of damage to the environment, especially the rock art and associated cultural heritage of the Sahara, is not confined to the regions described in this article. The problem is pan-Saharan, extending from Morocco and Mauritania in the west to Egypt and the Sudan in the east. Funding is currently being sought to establish a Sahara Studies Centre within the Institute of Archaeology at University College, London. One of the Centre's main aims will be to help all countries and peoples of the Sahara by supporting and coordinating research, drawing attention to the difficulties they are facing, and providing them with access to specialist training in both conservation techniques and in the development and management of conservation programmes.

## Notes

- 1 Lhote, H. *A La Découverte des Fresques du Tassili*, Paris (1st edition 1958) (2nd edition, Arthaud, Paris 1972). Translated as *The Search for the Tassili Frescoes: The story of the prehistoric rock-paintings of the Sahara*, Hutchinson & Co., London (1959).
- 2 For a description of much of this damage, see Keenan, J. (2000), "The theft of Saharan rock-art", *Antiquity* 74, 287-8; Keenan, J. (2001), *Sahara Man: Travelling with the Tuareg*, John Murray, London; and Keenan, J. (2002 forthcoming) "The Lesser Gods of the Sahara", *Journal of Public Archaeology*, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, London.
- 3 The events of September 11th 2001 have effectively given the region one more tourist-free tourist season.
- 4 Masc. sing. chinouï; masc. pl. chnaoui; fem. sing. chinouïa or chinouïette; fem. pl. chnaouta or chnaoutat (ettes).
- 5 The wali is the head of the civil administration in each of the country's wilayas (provinces) and is appointed by the President.
- 6 These changes are described in detail in: Keenan, J. (forthcoming), "Ethnicity, Regionalism and Political Stability in Algeria's Grand Sud", *North African Studies*.

## All photos by Jeremy Keenan

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# The Karen Response to Thai Conservation Policies

by Chumpol Maniratanavongsiri



For centuries, the Karen people co-existed with the forests of northern and western Thailand. They developed village structures and codes of practice that allowed for the sustainable management and use of natural resources within village territories. Villagers had control and security of tenure over land and other resources. Every family had equal access to resources and there were few disputes amongst villagers because of the low population and plentiful resources available. However, the traditional way of life of the Karen people began to undergo major change in the 1960s when the government passed legislation to control and conserve natural resources, including the National Park Act and the National Forest Reserve Act.

Forests surrounding Karen communities, which were once considered communal property, were designated as protected areas. For the most part, proper surveying was not done on these areas and forestry officials informed people through the local sub-district chiefs only after the fact that their land had been declared a national park or forest reserve (Narintarakul 1996). When their villages were first declared protected areas, there was no opposition from the Karen because they knew little about the consequences of living in a protected area and they lacked the education to be able to oppose government policies. When these areas were declared protected areas, the government de-gazetted only residential and irrigated land, but did not exclude swidden land, which has been an important part of the agricultural system of the Karen ever since. Land documents were to be issued for de-gazetted areas but, in most cases, only for very few plots of land in Karen villages was such a document given. The main reason for not obtaining land documents was that most people did not realise their need and had not insisted that the document be issued.

Since the 1980s, the government has created more laws and regulations to deal with the environmental crises resulting from high rates of deforestation, like droughts during dry seasons. Some of these measures, such as restricting access to forests or resettlement programs have caused hardship and greater poverty for the Karen, as they depend heavily on natural resources for living. This paper discusses the impact of the Thai government conservation policies on the daily life of the Karen people and how they have responded to these policies. It was based on re-

search conducted in two Karen villages in northern Thailand, namely, Moonlight and Sunlight (pseudonyms). Sunlight is a small village with 25 families and a population of 150 people, while Moonlight has 80 families and a population of 406 people. Sunlight is located in Rock National Park (pseudonym), while Moonlight is located in a national forest reserve. The location of the two villages within dissimilar types of protected area gives rise to different social, economic and political conditions.

National parks cover approximately 12 percent of the area of Thailand and aim to preserve forests, wildlife and unique scenery. As a result, policies regarding national parks focus on prohibiting the alteration and exploitation of natural resources in the area. In other words, all agricultural activities are illegal in national parks. In contrast, national forest reserves cover a much larger area, approximately 40 percent of the national territory, and have a less vigorous goal of



protecting the existing forests. In reality, much of the forest land in these designated forest reserve areas had already been converted to other uses, and regulations governing forest reserves allow for pre-existing uses, including limited exploitation and inhabitation.

## The Impact of conservation policies

This section discusses the impact of government conservation policies on the two Karen villages. National park laws have brought fears about the security of tenure into Karen villages. In addition to the psychological burden of uncertainty, conservation policies have an identifiable impact on civil rights. Park policies have also caused a scarcity of farmland and resulted in shortages of rice.

## Insecurity of settlements

The ancestors of the people of Sunlight and Moonlight migrated eastward from Mae Hong Son Province to Chiang Mai Province and settled in the valley areas of Sunlight and Moonlight over one hundred years ago. No official records document when the two villages were first established but informants report that Sunlight was established in the first decade of the 1900s, while Moonlight was established even earlier, before the turn of the century.

However, stability and security have proved to be elusive for these two villages. The creation of protected areas over the past decade has brought uncertainty to many indigenous villages. New conservation policies have taken control over the future of villages located within protected areas out of the hands of local people. The Karen and other highland groups who reside in protected areas have valid reason to feel insecure in their settlements. They see a recurring pattern throughout the world, in which indigenous communities are forced to relocate when their homelands are identified for inclusion in new protected areas.

In Thailand, several highland communities have been relocated from protected areas. McKinnon and Vienne (1989) report that, as of August 1988, some 5,000 people had been involuntarily moved out of national parks in Thailand. No recent statistics have been compiled but it can be assumed that the number of people who have been involuntarily resettled is now even higher.

The main purpose of resettlement is purported to be for conservation reasons but, in Thailand, other factors are also at play. Ganjanapun (1996: 213) asserts that the resettlement of the two Mien villages in Lampang province was not for the stated purposes of conservation but rather for the promotion of tourism.

Facing circumstances similar to other people who reside in protected areas, the people of Sunlight and, to



a lesser degree, the people of Moonlight, have no security in their homes. The situation is particularly precarious in Sunlight, where there have been persistent rumours that villages in the Rock National Park (RNP) area will be forcibly relocated. The people of Sunlight worry about relocation because none of them have land ownership documents. Without legal documentation, it is very difficult for villagers to counter charges by park officials that they are illegally residing in the park. They are, therefore, subject to relocation away from watershed areas at any time.

Local village control over the future of Sunlight is affected not only by the threat of relocation but also by strict regulations governing the settlement of people in the RNP area. According to Local Administration Laws, people who migrate to another village must register with the local district administration office within 15 days of their departure date. However, the administration office for the district where Sunlight is located will not permit people from outside the park area to register as a member of a village located in the park. This prohibition on new registrations affects the future of villages located in the park area. In Karen culture, when a couple marry, the husband moves to

the wife's village. However, park regulations prevent spouses and other newcomers from officially registering as a member of any village located within the national park. In Thailand, it is very important for people to register as a member of the community where they live. Some government services, health care for example, are provided only for local residents. People who are registered elsewhere are allowed to use the services but they may have to pay fees. The antipathy of the park authorities toward any hint of growth or development has additionally created an underclass of people without full citizen rights. In Moonlight, the situation is quite different because there is no immediate threat of resettlement away from forest reserves. The settlement of Moonlight is quite secure, even though only one plot of land in the village has an official document. Nor do people in Moonlight experience problems related to family or household registration at their local district office. However, most people in Moonlight still fear that one day their village could face a situation like the Karen villages in the RNP area.

### **The impact on civil rights**

Chapter 1, Section 4 of the 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand states that, "the human dignity, rights and liberty of the people shall be protected." Section 5 of the same Chapter goes further to say that, "the Thai people, irrespective of their origin, sex or religion, shall enjoy equal protection under this Constitution." However, the civil rights of the Karen people, as Thai citizens, are not always fully protected. Indeed, conservation policies often lead to a violation of the civil rights of the Karen people who live in protected areas. Their social rights are infringed in terms of equitable access to social services and ability to pursue a standard of life similar to that which is prevailing in the wider society.

### **Barriers to healthcare**

All Karen people in Sunlight and Moonlight have Thai citizenship. As Thai citizens, they have the same right to access social services as any other citizen. One of the most important social services the Thai government provides for poor people who live in rural areas is free healthcare. Free healthcare has been available for more than ten years and, in theory, all people in Sunlight and Moonlight are eligible because both villages are categorised by the government as poor villages.

In practice, however, many people – particularly those living in Sunlight – are ineligible for local healthcare services because of certain administrative procedures that must be followed in order to receive



these services. Before a person can be admitted for free healthcare at a local public hospital, they need to present the family health card and a citizenship card. The difficulty is that the provincial government issues the free health card to households rather than to individuals. The card lists all the names of the people who officially live in one household. The health card system creates difficulty for many people in Sunlight because they are from elsewhere and have married into the village. As discussed earlier, the local administration office does not allow people from outside the RNP area to register as a member of a village in the park area. Because they are not officially registered, they cannot have their names listed on their family health cards, and thus are denied free healthcare.

### Barriers to community development programs

The Thai government has a domestic development policy of working toward the provision of basic needs to all villages in Thailand. Several government departments are involved in improving the standard of living for the Thai people, including the four main Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Education and the Interior. Because Thailand is a developing country, basic infrastructure (i.e. roads, electricity and clean water supplies) is the main focus of development activities in remote rural areas. Agricultural extension programs also play an important role in helping to improve the standard of living for the rural poor.

However, rural villages do not receive equal assistance from the government and there is a distinct bias against providing basic needs for rural villages located in protected areas. In the last ten years, conservation policies of the Royal Forest Department have played a major role in blocking most development programs in rural highland villages. Laws governing forests, particularly those contained in the National Park Act, prevent or impede other government departments from providing assistance to people who live in protected areas.

This is precisely the case with the people of Sunlight. Because of park policies, the government will not provide the economic development programs that are available to other rural villages. Agricultural extension programs are denied and roads to the village are not built. In addition, the government does not provide any basic infrastructure, such as electricity or a clean water supply, to the village.

The people of Sunlight have taken it upon themselves to dig a trail, which connects their village to other roads. The trail provides vehicle access only in the dry season and so, during the rainy season, Sunlight is virtually cut off from other villages. Without an adequate road, it is not feasible for villagers to grow cash crops because they are unable to transport their produce to markets in Thai towns. Government policies discouraging road construction in national parks are not universally applied. In practice, road construction is not completely banned and RNP authorities have themselves built roads to waterfalls in the park in order to facilitate tourism.

*Members of the HNCC overlooking the land and forests of their member communities. Photo: Christian Erni*



In comparison to Sunlight, Moonlight has received more government development assistance and enjoys better economic and social conditions. The government constructed a road to the village more than two decades ago and, in 1997, the Accelerated Rural Development Office (ARD) paved the road. The paved road makes it easy for villagers to transport their agricultural products to markets. The government also provided a water supply and electricity to the village. Most significantly, a government agricultural extension centre was established in the village in 1977. This centre introduced temperate climate crops and has played a major role in improving the standard of living for the people of Moonlight. The chief of Moonlight estimates that the average income of people in the village has quadrupled since the opening of the agricultural extension centre.

### Scarcity of farm land

One of the results of the Thai government's conservation policies is a scarcity of land. There is, in fact, still plenty of land available for cultivation in both Sunlight and Moonlight but the use of the land for farming, particularly for swidden agriculture, is prohibited in many areas by conservation regulations. Even though both Sunlight and Moonlight are located in forests, the two villages face very different scenarios in terms of land available for cultivation.

As noted earlier, Moonlight faces fewer restrictions than Sunlight with regard to access to government development programs. The same scenario applies in terms of people's access to land for farming in the two villages. Because Moonlight is officially located in a national forest reserve, the people of Moonlight do not face as much pressure from foresters. Indeed, officials responsible for the forest reserve rarely visit the village.

In Sunlight, it is very difficult for people to cultivate forestland, particularly for swidden agriculture. The RNP strictly enforces a ban on swidden agriculture within park territory. Fifteen years ago, most families in Sunlight had at least seven plots of forest fallow for swidden agriculture. Today, the RNP has expropriated all of these swidden fields. The people of Sunlight can no longer use their previous forest fallow plots for agriculture because these lands are now considered national forests. The loss of large areas of swidden fields has led to a land shortage for many Karen families.

People who cut trees in forest fallow in preparation for cultivation are often arrested and charged by park officials. So far, no person in Sunlight has been charged but many Karen in nearby RNP villages have been charged for clearing trees in forest fallow.

### Shortage of rice

Sufficient rice production has always been problematic for many Karen communities in northern Thailand. However, prior to the 1980s, the problem of rice shortages was not critical because there was plenty of swidden land available for cultivation. Although the mountainous terrain of Sunlight and Moonlight limited the amount of land that could be converted to terraced fields, families could supplement their wet rice production through the cultivation of swidden rice.

Today, the Karen in Sunlight still cultivate wet rice on irrigated land, but it is much more difficult for them to cultivate dry rice or highland rice on swidden fields. The ban on swidden cultivation is the main reason for insufficient rice production in most Karen communities. Elderly people interviewed in both Sunlight and Moonlight claim that most families in the villages used to produce enough rice for household consumption. At present, according to informants, over 70 per cent of families in Sunlight and almost 60 per cent of families in Moonlight do not produce enough rice for their own consumption.

In the case of Moonlight, insufficient household rice production is a manageable problem. The chief of Moonlight reported that twenty years ago insufficient rice production was a major problem for many families in his village. People would grow both wet rice and dry rice but yields from swidden land were often low because there were too many pine trees in the area, and soil in pine tree areas contained too few nutrients to grow dry rice.

Today, the people of Moonlight produce even less rice for household consumption than they did twenty years ago. Although almost 60 per cent of families in Moonlight do not produce enough rice for annual household consumption, most families manage to generate enough income to buy additional rice. Families acquired the means to deal with rice shortages when the government began agricultural extension programs to assist them in growing cash crops.

The chief of Moonlight estimates that over 90 per cent of people in Moonlight manage to generate enough income from growing cash crops to buy rice, while fewer than 10 per cent of families in the village still have problems with rice shortages. The chief of Moonlight further believes that the families who have problems with rice shortages have this difficulty because of heroin addiction. In Sunlight, there is no heroin addiction and the use of drugs cannot be blamed for household shortages of rice. Rather, shortages are the result of limitations placed on swidden farming and the lack of government agricultural extension programs. A village elder in Sunlight reported that, before the national park was established, over 70 per cent of the people in Sunlight produced enough rice for their own consumption. And the remaining 30 per cent were able to pro-



duce enough rice to last at least eight or nine months. For these latter families, it was relatively easy to generate enough income from wage labour in the village or neighbouring villages to buy rice for the remaining months before the new crop. Another source of income for these families who did not produce enough rice came from selling domestic animals or forest products in neighbouring Thai towns.

Today, the problem of food shortage in Sunlight is more critical because, with the ban on swidden farming, most families can only produce enough rice to last four or five months. Sunlight residents have experienced difficulty in coping with their food crisis, because they have few choices or alternatives to turn to. Most families are forced to seek temporary employment outside the village for longer periods than in the past.

### **The Karen response**

Because most Karen want to remain on their native lands, they have had to adapt their way of life to cope with the changes brought about by conservation measures. They have adapted their land use practices to make them more compatible with government conservation policies.

### **Land use adaptation**

The scarcity of land available for farming is currently a grave concern in Karen communities because of the combined pressures of restrictive conservation policies and population growth. To remain on their lands, they have had to adapt their agricultural practices in order to survive. These adaptations include using irrigated lands and permanent gardens more intensively for cash cropping and fruit orchards, and converting swidden lands into irrigated fields and fruit orchards.

### **Irrigated land**

Traditionally, irrigated land was used primarily to grow wet rice. Wet rice was grown only once a year during the rainy season and, after it was harvested, the paddy fields were left fallow over the summer. In some Karen communities, farmers grew tobacco after the rice season, but this was done only on a very small scale. Generally, during the dry season, paddy fields were only used to graze cattle. Today, irrigated land is used much more intensively and for various purposes. Paddy fields are now cultivated year round and used not only for growing wet rice but also for growing many different kinds of cash crops, such as garlic or flowers. Most Karen people in the village case studies still grow wet rice as the main crop during the rainy season but, after the paddy rice is harvested, they grow other crops.



The people of Sunlight still largely follow traditional agricultural practices in their irrigated fields. Wet rice is grown as the main crop during the rainy season and small-scale cash crops such as soybean and garlic are grown during the dry season. A key informant in Sunlight explained that most poor families in the village do not want to invest heavily in cash crops because of the high risks and unstable markets. It is also not feasible for residents to grow cash crops on a larger scale because most of Sunlight's paddy fields are located in a steep valley that is inaccessible to trucks.

The people of Moonlight have more easily adapted to limitations placed on cultivatable land. They have changed their patterns of land use and now most irrigated lands in the village are used intensively throughout the year. They are able to do this because the village has a good irrigation system. The Accelerated Rural Development Office (ARD) built a reservoir on the outskirts of the village in 1978. The reservoir, which has a capacity of 400,000 cubic metres, enables villagers to grow crops during the dry season.

Most families in Moonlight continue the traditional practice of growing paddy rice in the rainy season. During the dry season, a few farmers will grow a second crop of paddy rice but most do not because too much of the yield is lost to insects and birds. Most families now earn income by growing cash crops on irrigated fields during the dry season, and some do so all year round. In the two decades since a highland development program began introducing new fruits, vegetables and flowers to Moonlight, cash crops have assumed an increasingly important role in the village economy. In fact, a few families have stopped growing rice completely since adopting cash crops. Some families earn over 100,000 *baht* (2,300 US\$) a year from selling their produce.

### Permanent gardens

Traditionally, permanent gardens were only used to grow fruits and vegetables for household consumption. However today, permanent gardens are also used to grow cash crops. Like cash crops grown in paddy fields, the produce of permanent gardens has become important to the economy of Moonlight. Traditionally, permanent gardens were located mainly in the household compound but now many farmers have converted former swidden lands located away from the village into permanent gardens. In Moonlight, farmers now use permanent gardens to grow avocado, persimmons, pears, peaches and other fruit trees adopted from temperate climates but they also use their permanent gardens to cultivate short-term cash crops.

In Sunlight, the possibility of expanding permanent gardens to cope with a scarcity of land is limited by national park policies. Most permanent gardens in the village continue to be located within household com-

### A Successful Partnership

Since 1996, IWGIA and the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT), an indigenous NGO based in Chiang Mai, have jointly supported the work of the Highland Natural Conservation Club, one of the watershed networks of the Karen in Northern Thailand. The years-long partnership between the three organisations has allowed the HNCC to build up the necessary capacity among its members to address the problems they are confronted with themselves. The HNCC is now recognized as a negotiation partner by the local government and at least the local officials of the Royal Forest Department. Their relationship has much improved, conflicts are fewer and negotiations more frequent. This raises hope among the HNCC communities inside the two National Parks that a lasting solution recognizing their right to live off their land and with the forest will eventually be found.





pounds and cash crops have only a limited role in the village economy. Permanent gardens in Sunlight are still mainly used to grow produce for household consumption and to meet subsistence needs.

### Swidden land

Even though swidden agriculture is considered an illegal practice in national parks, it is still an important means of food production for people in Sunlight. Villagers need to continue using swidden lands to grow food, so they have adapted their methods of cultivation in order to cope with park restrictions. Traditionally, swidden fields would be left fallow for seven to eight years before a new crop was cultivated. However, with park restrictions, the people of Sunlight now repeatedly cultivate the same field year after year.

Although the Karen are aware that using the same swidden field year after year depletes soil nutrients and prevents trees from regenerating they have no choice but to do so because, if the trees were allowed to regenerate in forest fallow, park regulations would prevent them from re-clearing the plot. Because villagers can no longer use forest fallow, they instead try to convert existing cultivated swidden fields into terraced lands or permanent gardens.

At present, most swidden lands in Sunlight are located near terraced fields. This is not a normal phenomenon in traditional practice of swidden agriculture but rather it reflects a way of coping with park restrictions. A key informant in Sunlight explained why he practises swidden agriculture so close to terraced lands:

*"Traditionally, we only practised swidden agriculture in forest fallow but, today, it is impossible for us to do so. Park officials do not allow us to cultivate forest fallow or any land having trees. However, they unofficially let us cultivate terraced lands. Therefore, the only way we can survive is to expand our terraced fields by converting nearby swidden lands. Most people try to clear forests beside their terraced lands so that they can convert it in the future."*

To a very limited degree, people in Sunlight manage to circumvent a complete ban on tree cutting in the park because of the political and social realities facing local park rangers who live in close proximity. The same key informant in Sunlight described how he surreptitiously cleared some forested land:

*"Though park officials do not permit us to clear trees near our terraced land, we cut trees secretly. From my observation, rangers come to our village only once a week and mostly on Fridays. Therefore, we do not cut down trees on that day. Local officials informally advise us that when we see them approach while cutting down trees, we should run or they will have no choice but to arrest us. I also know that they do not like us cutting down trees in blatantly large areas because it is easy for them to see. But if I cut down a few trees in a small area, they will not pay much attention to it."*

In addition to converting swidden land to terraced fields, some Sunlight villagers have also converted their swidden plots to permanent gardens.

In Moonlight, swidden agriculture is also being abandoned. However, in contrast to Sunlight, the impetus for change in Moonlight comes not from the pressures exerted by conservation laws but rather from the alternative means of livelihood that are available to people. In Moonlight, agricultural practices have been adapted by the conversion of swidden lands to terraced fields and permanent gardens. In Moonlight, the government has provided assistance in the conversion of swidden fields to terraces and orchards through the Land Development Department (LDD). While, in the case of Sunlight, the expansion of rice terraces is limited by national park policies, in Moonlight, expansion is limited by the availability of water for cropping.

### Response to the loss of food self-sufficiency

As discussed in the previous section, rice production in both Sunlight and Moonlight has been greatly reduced because of the decline in swidden agriculture. As described above, the Karen have responded to their inability to produce enough rice for household consumption in a number of ways. While one of the responses in

both villages has been to grow more cash crops to generate income for rice purchases, it is not an option for many poor families because they do not have the necessary capital. The lack of a good road to Sunlight also limits villagers' ability to grow cash crops because of the difficulty in transporting products to market.

Because many villagers have less land for farming, another response has been to seek temporary or seasonal employment outside of their village. Due to differences in altitude and temperature, the main agricultural season in lowland areas begins later in the calendar and many agricultural activities take place year round. This allows the Karen to seek temporary employment in neighbouring Thai towns during their off-season. Many rural Thai communities are facing labour shortages in agricultural production because their young people prefer to work in shopping malls or factories in the cities, where the work is less physically tiring and the salaries higher. This creates an opportunity for people in Sunlight and Moonlight to find temporary employment in agricultural production in nearby Thai towns. Various jobs are available to them, such as collecting longan fruits, planting rice, garlic or onions, and harvesting rice. The Karen find employ-

*Members of HNCC explaining a three-dimensional model of their area. Such models are used by the communities in for community-based resource management and conservation planning. Photo: Christian Erni*



ment not only as seasonal agricultural labourers but they also work in other sectors as well. People from Sunlight have worked in a range of unskilled positions in Thai towns, including in resorts, restaurants and private homes. Because there are more educated people in Moonlight, some of them have obtained white-collar jobs in Thai towns and cities. Some are teachers, agricultural extension professionals or public health officials, who have made a permanent move outside the village. The less educated young people from Moonlight find temporary or seasonal work in gas stations, restaurants, resorts or factories.

Wage employment has become a crucial source of income for most poor families. Wages allow them to cover shortages in rice production. Older people prefer to seek temporary or seasonal employment in nearby Thai towns, while more young people want to find full-time jobs in cities.

### **Response to the impediment of development programs**

As previously discussed, government development programs to assist Karen villages in the RNP have been blocked by park authorities. Because they cannot rely on the government for any services, the people of Sunlight have responded by organising self-help projects and making requests for support to non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Villagers in Sunlight have demonstrated a great deal of self-reliance by digging roads and installing running water themselves. They had repeatedly requested the government to provide them with basic infrastructure but to no avail, as the RNP blocked most government development activities in the park. The people of Sunlight then joined with other Karen villages in the area to dig their own road to connect their villages to one of the closest paved roads. It took the people of Sunlight and their neighbours almost three years to complete the road. The chief of Sunlight reported that building the road took many years because the people did not have the appropriate equipment. They used only locally available tools to build through an area that had steep slopes and many rocks. Also, people were occupied with earning their livelihoods and could only work on the road during their spare time. And, lastly, they had to build the road bit by bit so as not to attract the intervention of the park officials who would enforce the ban on development of any type in the park. Now that the road has been built, villagers are able to reap the benefits, which include greater ease in transporting produce to Thai markets and taking sick people to hospital.

In addition to building the road, other self-help projects have been implemented in Sunlight. A running water system was installed without any government support. An Irish NGO provided funding for the sup-

plies (PVC pipes and adhesives), while people in the village assisted each other in installing the pipes.

In the absence of government services, the people of Sunlight have found alternatives in the programs of various NGOs. For example, international and local church organisations have contributed to community development programs in Sunlight. Because there is no school in the village, the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) has, for more than ten years, provided funding to assist children who choose to board and attend school outside of Sunlight.

The Chiang Mai Diocesan Social Action Centre (CDSAC), a Catholic development organisation, also plays a crucial role in supporting community programs in Sunlight. Amongst the projects that CDSAC has funded, one of the most important was that of providing initial funding to establish a rice bank. The rice bank helps people cope with rice shortages by allowing them to borrow rice at the start of the rainy season when household supplies have run out. After the harvest, borrowers must return the equivalent amount of rice together with a small "fee", which is also paid in rice. People in the village, working through a village committee, have sole responsibility for managing the rice bank.

Moonlight also has a rice bank. It has been in operation since 1970, when the Catholic Church provided the initial funding to set it up. In Moonlight, it was the church, and not government, that provided the first development programs for villagers.

### **The formation of watershed networks and other civil society organisations**

Traditionally, each Karen village had responsibility for the natural resources within its own territory. Each village had a council of elders to look after the use and management of natural resources. However, with the intervention of the RFD, councils of elders have lost much of their power to manage the use of forests within village territories.

During the past ten years, in response to government conservation policies, many Karen communities have established new structures for forest management. They have formed civil society organisations that bring together young educated people and village elders from different villages located in the same watershed or district, to create networks of villages that work together on particular issues. Several forest management organisations are active amongst the Karen in northern Thailand, including the Highland Natural Conservation Club (HNCC), the Mae Wang Watershed Network (MWWN), the Mae Khan Watershed Network (MKWN) and the Highland Watershed and Wildlife Conservation Club (HWWCC).

The new organisations aim to merge traditional knowledge and beliefs with modern forest management practices. They have worked to develop rules that govern the use of natural resources. These new regula-



tions and land and forest classifications are based upon wisdom and terms conveyed through *ora'* tradition, but are documented in written terms that are more compatible with scientific forestry. In doing so, these organisations hope to reassert the importance of community-based resource management in a manner that is understandable to both local people and the wider Thai public. Each village in the district or watershed network sends two or three representatives to the network's council meetings. They meet every two or three months to share knowledge and discuss problems that have occurred in their communities.

The Highland Natural Conservation Club (HNCC) is one of these watershed networks. It was founded in 1989 by a group of educated Karen people in response to high levels of conflict with a lowland conservation group operating in the highlands. The HNCC brought together educated people and local leaders in the area to discuss land use and forest management problems. After the first meeting, the group came to the conclusion that a network of communities was required because many problems could not be solved at the village level alone.

One of the co-founders of the Highland Natural Conservation Club described his reasons for forming the organisation. He believed that the Karen needed a new management organisation if they were to continue living in the forest. He related how, over the previous ten years, there had been high levels of conflict over resource utilisation between the Karen people and both park officials and people living in lowland areas. Park officials accused the Karen for illegally cultivating land in park territory and lowlanders blamed them for the decrease in water flowing into lowland areas. The Karen people in the area thus needed to work together to create better understanding between the highlanders and the lowlanders and government officials.

The conservation groups and watershed networks have embarked on a wide range of activities. These include establishing written rules and regulations to systematise the use of natural resources; classifying and conveying land and forest uses through the development of land use maps and three-dimensional models; preventing forest destruction; and lobbying local government officials to recognise Karen land use rights. The activities of the watershed network are carried out at the village level by volunteer committees. The committee members, normally comprising the village chief, deputy chiefs and five to eight other members selected from among the villagers, ensure that villagers follow the rules and regulations established by the network.

The details adopted by different conservation groups or watershed networks may vary but they use similar concepts and methods in working to protect natural resources within the network territory. The group or network classifies forest and land into three main categories: untouchable forests, usable forests and habitat lands, which includes farmland. The group or network

also uses land use maps and three-dimensional models to document the boundaries of each category. Maps and models make it easier for outsiders, particularly city dwellers and government officials, to see the larger picture and understand how the Karen use and manage the forests surrounding their community. Land use mapping and three-dimensional models have been widely used as implementation tools amongst local networks, following on from the success of the Upland Social Forestry Pilot Project (USFPP). The USFPP was a joint project carried out in the 1990s between Chiang Mai University and the Sam Mun Highland Development Project, which tried to promote joint forest management between local people and forest officials.

Conservation groups and watershed networks play an important role in preventing forest destruction. Member villages are asked to stop outsiders from cutting down trees within the group or network territory and also to prevent forest fires. During the dry season, villagers will build fire control lines or fire breaks around their community to prevent forest fires. But, if one does occur, villagers will fight the forest fire. Because they contribute to controlling forest fires, park officials do show some goodwill towards local people.

Another important activity of the conservation groups and networks is that of lobbying local government, such as district and forestry officials, to recognise the rights of local people to forest and land use. This has met with some success. Local forestry officials have come to recognise the need for joint forest management with local people. However, local officials can only agree unofficially to joint forest management and they have no authority to legitimise the practice.

Prior to 1994, conservation groups and watershed networks worked alone to solve problems and negotiate with local government. But it became increasingly recognised that many problems arose out of national policies and laws that local officials did not have the authority to change. A new organisational framework was needed for political mobilisation beyond a single watershed - one that involved alliances with interest groups in addition to neighbouring villages. This came to fruition in 1994 with the formation of the Northern Farmers' Development Network (NFDN) (Narintarakul 1996:142). The NFDN is a broad coalition of Karen organisations, other highland groups and lowland farmers. The new coalition received significant support from academic scholars at Chiang Mai University and from the staff of NGOs working on rural development.

Narintarakul (1996: 143-144) reports that the NFDN framework called for three levels of mobilisation: at the village, watershed and policy levels. At the village level, mobilisation involves, firstly, informing the community of state policy and its local implications and, secondly, establishing conservation groups to systematise the use of natural resources and prevent en-

vironmental destruction. At the watershed level, different villages co-ordinate activities and co-operate on a range of issues. At a policy level, the NFDN joins other organisations in lobbying the government for policy changes that recognise the coexistence of people and nature. Members of the NFDN believe that human settlements are compatible with healthy forests, as long as policy incorporates indigenous knowledge of sustainable forestry practices and generates community commitment through local input into policy development. Narintarakul (1996) reports that limited success in dealing with local officials has led the NFDN to establish a policy of not lobbying locally but rather targeting the minister responsible for the national forestry department. In addition to negotiating with government, the NFDN has also mobilised thousands of its members to join other protesters from the Assembly of the Poor, an organisation that lobbies for the rights of the rural poor (Sukrung 1997).

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## All photos by Christian Erni, IWGIA.

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# IWGIA - INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

## IWGIA's aims and activities

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs - IWGIA - is a non-profit, politically independent, international membership organisation.

IWGIA co-operates with indigenous peoples all over the world and supports their struggle for human rights and self-determination, their right to control of land and resources, their cultural integrity, and their right to development. The aim of IWGIA is to defend and endorse the rights of indigenous peoples in concurrence with their own efforts and desires. An important goal is to give indigenous peoples the possibility of organising themselves and to open up channels for indigenous peoples' own organisations to claim their rights.

IWGIA works at local, regional and international levels to further the understanding and knowledge of, and the involvement in, the cause of indigenous peoples.

The activities of IWGIA include: publications, human rights work, networking, conferences, campaigns and projects.

For more information about IWGIA's activities please, check our website at: [www.iwgia.org](http://www.iwgia.org)

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IWGIA publishes a yearbook, *The Indigenous World/El Mundo Indígena* - and a quarterly journal *Indigenous Affairs/Asuntos Indígenas*. Furthermore, a number of books thematically focussing on indigenous issues are published each year.

Suggestions for and contributions to IWGIA's publications are welcome and should be submitted to the editors in charge.

IWGIA's publications can be ordered through our website: [www.iwgia.org](http://www.iwgia.org), by e-mail: [iwgia@iwgia.org](mailto:iwgia@iwgia.org) or by fax: +45 35 27 05 07.

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IWGIA and A.I.T.P.N., 2001  
ISBN 87-90730-46-1, ISSN 0108-4503



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