



WPC Recommendation 26 Community Conserved Areas

A considerable part of the earth's biodiversity survives on territories under the ownership, control, or management of indigenous peoples and local (including mobile) communities. However, the fact that such peoples and communities are actively or passively conserving many of these sites through traditional or modern means, has hitherto been neglected in formal conservation circles.

Such sites, herein called Community Conserved Areas (CCAs), are extremely diverse in their institutions of governance, objectives of management, ecological and cultural impacts, and other attributes. Two primary characteristics distinguish them:

1. Predominant or exclusive control and management by communities, and
2. Commitment to conservation of biodiversity, and/or its achievement through various means.

In this context, CCAs are natural and modified ecosystems, including significant biodiversity, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous and local communities through customary laws or other effective means. The term as used here is meant to connote a broad and open approach to categorizing such community initiatives, and is not intended to constrain the ability of communities to conserve their areas in the way they feel appropriate.

Various international instruments dealing with environmental and human rights have recognised the role of communities in relation to natural resource management, such as:

1. The emphasis provided by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to the biodiversity-relevant knowledge, skills, innovations, and practices of communities; or
2. The Draft *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which acknowledges the right of such peoples to control and manage their territories.

Today, most CCAs remain unrecognised in national and international conservation systems, and are largely outside the official protected area networks of countries. This may be because the resource management systems of CCAs are often based on customary tenure systems, norms and institutions that are not formally or legally recognized in many countries.

CCAs as they exist today serve the management objectives of different protected area categories.

Nevertheless, CCAs everywhere are facing threats, including:

1. Those resulting from unclear and insecure tenurial arrangements;
2. Unsustainable developmental projects;
3. Delegitimization of customary rights;
4. Centralized political decision-making processes;
5. Social, economic and political inequities;
6. Loss of knowledge and cultural change; and
7. Commercialization of resources.

It is therefore recognized that communities need support and facilitation to respond to these threats, and to enable them to reach greater security in their conservation and sustainable use practices.

Mindful of these points, participants in the cross-cutting Theme entitled "Communities and Equity" have deliberated on CCAs in several sessions of the 5th World Parks Congress, and have concluded that national and international recognition of such areas is a urgent necessity.

Therefore, PARTICIPANTS in the Communities and Equity Cross-Cutting Theme at the Vth World Parks Congress, in Durban South Africa (8-17 September 2003):

1. RECOMMEND governments to:
 - a. PROMOTE a multisectoral process for recognizing, enlisting, evaluating, and delisting CCAs;
 - b. RECOGNIZE and PROMOTE CCAs as a legitimate form of biodiversity conservation, and where communities so choose, include them within national systems of protected areas, through appropriate changes in legal and policy regimes;
 - c. ENSURE that official policies, guidelines, and principles, recognise diverse local (formal or informal) arrangements developed by communities on their own or in collaboration with other actors, for the management of CCAs;
 - d. FACILITATE the continuation of existing CCAs, and their spread to other sites, through a range of measures including, financial, technical, human, information, research, public endorsement, capacity-building, and other resources or incentives that are considered appropriate by the communities concerned, as well as the restitution of traditional and customary rights;

- e. ACKNOWLEDGE that it may be appropriate for some existing protected areas to be managed as CCAs, including the transfer of management of such areas to relevant communities;
 - f. PROVIDE protection to CCAs against external threats they face, including those mentioned in the preamble;
 - g. RESPECT the sanctity and importance of CCAs in all operations that could affect such sites or the relevant communities, and give particular attention to applying the principles of Prior Informed Consent, participatory environmental impact assessments, and other measures as elaborated in decisions and documents of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
 - h. SUPPORT self-monitoring and evaluation of CCAs by the relevant communities, and participatory monitoring and evaluation by outside agencies or actors; and
 - i. PROVIDE impartial information when and where needed and/or asked for by the relevant communities;
2. ALSO RECOMMEND communities to:
- a. COMMIT to conserving the biodiversity in CCAs, maintaining ecological services, and protecting associated cultural values;
 - b. CONSIDER extending the network of CCAs to sites not currently being conserved or sustainably managed;
 - c. STRENGTHEN or initiate measures to respond to forces that threaten CCAs, including those mentioned in the preamble above;
 - d. RECOGNIZE the ecological, cultural, and other values of the CCAs and species that are within territories the communities are controlling and managing;
 - e. SEEK public recognition for the CCAs they are managing where it is appropriate, including from governments; and
 - f. COMMIT to strengthening or developing effective mechanisms for internal accountability;
3. FURTHER RECOMMEND conservation agencies and other non-government organizations (NGOs), donor agencies, private sector, and other actors:
- a. RESPECT the sanctity and importance of CCAs in all their operations that could affect such sites or the relevant communities, and in particular activities that could adversely affect them; and

- b. PROVIDE support of various kinds to CCAs, where considered appropriate by the concerned community, including to help build capacity;
4. CALL on international organizations to:
- a. RECOGNIZE CCAs in all relevant instruments and databases, including in the United Nations List of Protected Areas, and the World Protected Areas Database;
 - b. PROVIDE adequate space for consideration of CCAs in relevant documents, such as the State of the World's Protected Areas Report, and Protected Areas in the 21st Century;
 - c. PROMOTE OCCAs through appropriate programmes of work, in particular the Programme of Work of the CBD on protected areas; and
 - d. INTEGRATE CCAs into the IUCN Protected Areas Category System, through the introduction of a dimension of governance, appropriate interpretations and additions to the definitions and guidelines especially regarding cultural values, and work towards identifying CCAs that would fit into each of the six IUCN Protected Areas Categories.

Stream: Indigenous/Local Communities, Equity, and Protected Areas

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