

Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation and Management in Ghana

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ABSTRACT An analysis of a series of biodiversity related areas in Ghana, including ecosystem, water and soil management, farming, fishing and hunting practices and the collection of herbal medicines, shows that indigenous knowledge has the potential to contribute to the conservation of species, genes and ecosystems. Moreover, as these traditional rules are owned by the locals, they might be implemented more rigorously than governmental laws. However, in the contemporary fast changing societies of sub Saharan Africa IK is less and less applied and at risk of disappearance. In spite of important paradigmatic differences between IKS and modern science, traditional knowledge is at its best when it is matched with scientific approaches. Eminent examples of this can be found in the development of medical drugs that stem from herbal medicines. Similar approaches are needed and possible for biodiversity conservation. They should focus on questions on effectiveness, efficiency and monitoring of situations where IK is brought in into biodiversity conservation and management. At the governmental policy level it is remarkable that IK has currently no place in biodiversity conservation strategies. Nevertheless there is a high need to involve local communities in such policies. This is illustrated by providing two examples: the urgent need to curb fundamentally Ghana's logging policy of its tropical forest and the need to involve local communities in the management of the Kakum Conservation area.

List of abbreviations:

CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (of South Africa)
CSRPM	Centre for Scientific Research into Plant Medicine
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge System
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
NTFRs	Non-Timber Forest Resources
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development