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# INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE & ENVIRONMENT

## EXPERIMENTATION, INNOVATION, ADAPTATION

**I**NDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE (IK), ALSO REFERRED TO AS 'TRADITIONAL' or 'local' knowledge is embedded in to the community and is unique to a given culture, location or society. The term refers to the large body of knowledge and skills, including Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) as well as Indigenous Technological Knowledge (ITK), that has been developed outside the formal education system and that enables vulnerable communities to survive.

IK is dynamic, the result of a continuous process of experimentation, innovation, and adaptation. It has the capacity to blend with knowledge based on science and technology, and should therefore be considered complementary to scientific and technological efforts to solve problems in social and economic development as well as coping with climate change.

The dominance of the western knowledge system has largely led to a prevailing situation in which IK is ignored and neglected. It is therefore easy to forget that, over many centuries, human beings have been producing knowledge and strategies enabling them to survive in a balanced relation with their natural and social environment.

Handed down orally from generation to generation IK has the disadvantage of not being captured and stored in a systematic way. This creates an implicit danger that if not addressed IK may become extinct.

### BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF IK

- ✓ IK is generated within communities
  - ✓ IK is location and culture specific
  - ✓ IK is the basis for decision making and survival strategies
  - ✓ IK is not systematically documented
  - ✓ IK concerns critical issues of human and animal life
  - ✓ IK is dynamic and based on innovation, adaptation, and experimentation
- IK being linked to survival and subsistence provides a basis for local community level decision-making in the areas of:
- ✓ Food Security
  - ✓ Human and Animal Health
  - ✓ Education
  - ✓ Natural Resource Management
  - ✓ Various other Community-Based Activities. ▣

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*The unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area.*

IK DEFINED BY LOUISE GRENIER

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