



A project focused on traditional knowledge in Guyana

In last week's article we highlighted the important role that Indigenous people have played in supporting conservation efforts. Their traditional knowledge (knowledge, practices and innovations) therefore needs to be considered in local conservation efforts. This means increasing efforts at various levels to improve dialogue between Indigenous people and decision-makers, and to support their rights to continue to use and safeguard their traditional knowledge.

With that in mind, a Darwin Initiative (UK-funded) project titled '***Integrating Traditional Knowledge into National Policy and Practices in Guyana***' has been working towards addressing these very areas. The project commenced in 2017 and has been working with Indigenous communities associated with Iwokrama, Kanuku Mountains Protected Areas and the Kanashen Community owned Conservation Area. Working in selected communities, activities have been focused on discussions around the role of traditional knowledge in culture, biodiversity and the management of protected areas, the threats and challenges to traditional knowledge and potential solutions for maintaining and strengthening traditional knowledge. Community members have benefited from training in participatory video techniques that has enabled them to produce short videos that capture aspects of their traditional knowledge and practices, the opinions of individuals on a particular issue affecting their community and recommendations to address such issues. Capacity building is also needed at the governmental level where decision-makers sit. As such, training has been developed and facilitated with the aim of raising the awareness of the rights of Indigenous peoples and the important role that traditional knowledge can play in national decision-making processes.

More ambitiously, using the evidence gathered from the communities, the project has developed a **Traditional Knowledge National Action Plan (TKNAP)** for Guyana. The goal of the TKNAP is to 'Strengthen and support increased inclusivity of Guyana's Indigenous peoples in national decision-making and to safeguard their traditional knowledge, innovations and practices'. The TKNAP aims to address the following areas regarding Indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge in Guyana:

- (i) Increased recognition and respect: proposed actions support improved awareness of the knowledge, innovations and practices of Guyana's Indigenous peoples, their contributions to conservation and development, and the challenges they face that affect their ability to maintain and safeguard it;
- (ii) Greater inclusion: proposed actions seek to improve the efforts of government institutions to facilitate improved dialogue with Indigenous communities and representative groups, with the aim of ensuring that the opinions of Indigenous people are appropriately documented and better considered in making informed decisions; and
- (iii) Effective participation: proposed actions intend to use best practices in community engagement and participatory video to promote improved participation, communication and dialogue between Indigenous peoples and decision-makers, and to build capacity in these areas.

The proposed actions are captured under three (3) objectives: raise awareness nationally of the critical role of Indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge; strengthen local laws, governance and mechanisms for respect and use of traditional knowledge; and empower

Indigenous communities to document and address matters pertaining to safeguarding their traditional knowledge and promote continued respect and use of it.

In the articles to follow, we will discuss the relevance and importance of each of the proposed actions under each objective in the draft TKNAP. If you would like to learn more about some of the work that has been done in communities please visit the following website:

<https://cobracollective.org/tag/darwin/>.

Also, how do you feel about traditional knowledge and the role it plays in conservation? What do you think about a Traditional Knowledge National Action Plan for Guyana? Please share your thoughts via 592 650 6632 (WhatsApp or SMS only).

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O ECEA Programme, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel.