

Side event on ICCAs in South and East Asia, with partners from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Taiwan; organised by ICCA Consortium, KV and Foundation for Ecological Security, (9 October, 2012)

Context

Kalpavriksh, in collaboration with ICCA Consortium and Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), is organising a half-day workshop on the potential to achieve the Aichi Targets through Community Conserved Areas (CCAs). CCAs are ecosystems that are voluntarily conserved by local communities through customary laws or other effective means.¹ While countries in South and East Asia have engaged with this form of conservation for centuries, recognition for these, in both the national and international arena, has only recently begun. In the Indian context, the government of India has recognised CCAs as potential forms of conservation in the Wild Life Protection Act (as Community Reserves), the Forest Rights Act (as Community Forest Resources), the 11th 5 year plan (2007-12)², the National Biodiversity Action Plan (2008)³, the National Mission for Green India (2010)⁴, and other policy documents. It has been widely recognized that CCAs have great potential to help achieve the CBD Aichi Targets, especially Target 11 on protected areas. However, little has changed on the ground for actually supporting such CCAs, which continue to face serious threats from grabbing of land and water resources by strong economic and corporate entities, supported by perverse government subsidies and policies. These include international Carbon based instruments.

About the event

In this three-hour event the participants explored various issues facing CCAs in South and East Asia, focusing on the opportunities and threats faced by these spaces and communities. It also delved into various CBD decisions related to CCAs and Aichi targets towards conservation, to explore the extent to which CCAs can be supported to achieve Aichi targets in South and East Asia

Experiences were shared by participants from **Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, India** and **Taiwan**, particularly focusing on:

- The status of CCAs in these countries
- Status of their legal recognition, including vis a vis the formal protected area system
- Status of recognition through non legal means
- Their potential at being able to achieve Aichi Targets, particularly Target 11, and opportunities and constraints faced while realizing this potential

Outcome

A large number of threats and issues facing CCAs emerged during the event. It was also felt that these issues and threats were more or less the same for all countries and were also emanating from same or similar forces and processes, these included lack of understanding about these; lack of knowledge about these; economic policies being implemented in countries which do not respect the rights of the

¹http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp11/wg11_wildlife.pdf

²http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/11th/11_v1/11th_vol1.pdf

³<http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/NBAP-iyb.pdf>

⁴<http://india.gov.in/allimpfrms/alldocs/15028.pdf>

communities and favour economic powers over the interests of the local people; land and water resource grabbing; extractive and hydroelectric projects (including projects such wind power and solar power); carbon related instruments; conservation policies not taking into account CCAs and the right of the local communities, among others. One common voice from all was a need for **recognition** of CCAs in all countries in the manner appropriate and acceptable by the concerned communities, instead of imposed and inappropriate legal means.

Towards this many expressed a desire to connect with each other more strong to provide strength to each other's efforts and struggles. The energy was strong enough for the participants to suggest another informal meeting to discuss follow up actions.

This meeting was finally organised on the 11th and led to a number of suggestions including:

- More members expressed a desire to become members of the Consortium or have smaller discussion groups within South Asia.
- Stay connected with each other through some joint actions
- Support each others' struggles through alerts
- Among others

A publication on 'Community Conserved Areas in South Asia: Case studies and analyses from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka' was also realeased during this event, bringing together the efforts of a number of partners from various countries (supported by UNEP-UNDP SGP and published by Kapavriksh).