

Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) in South Asia Towards an Understanding of their Conservation and Livelihood Security Values

Kalpavriksh in association with the IUCN Commissions of WCPA/CEESP Strategic Direction on Governance, Communities, Equity, and Livelihood Rights in Relation to Protected Areas (TILCEPA) and the CBD Alliance.

A Narrative Report

Background

Nature conservation is often understood to happen only within the limited boundaries of protected areas, managed by government agencies. These are conceived as islands of conservation where any form of human intervention is considered harmful for wildlife. In contrast to this model, but with the same objective of conservation, are thousands of ‘unofficial’ protected areas across the globe, managed and sustained by ordinary people. In fact, indigenous, mobile, and local communities have played a critical role in conserving a variety of natural environments and species for millennia, for various economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic purposes.

There are many of these Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) around the world today. CCAs can be defined as *natural and modified ecosystems (with minimal to substantial human influence) – providing significant biodiversity, ecological services and cultural values– voluntarily conserved by indigenous peoples and other local communities through customary laws or other effective means*¹ (Hundreds of such examples have been documented, but many more are yet to be unearthed². These include a huge diversity of efforts: from continued traditional protection of sacred sites, catchment forests, indigenous territories, nesting/feeding/wintering sites of water birds, turtle nesting sites, sustainable fishery sites, and others, to a revived interest and engagement of communities in protecting natural ecosystems and resources, and community attempts at saving natural habitats from the penetration of destructive commercial and industrial forces. Historical practices of conservation and sustainable use of natural resources embodied in many CCAs are much older than government managed protected areas, yet they are often neglected and seldom recognised within official conservation systems. Consequently, many face enormous threats to their existence.

In the last few years there has been an increased interest in community conservation and its significance in the big conservation picture. The Fifth World Parks Congress, organised by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in September 2003 in Durban, South Africa, was the biggest ever gathering of conservationists (with over 4000 participants). Among its major outputs were the “Durban Accord and Action Plan”, the “Message to the Convention on Biological Diversity”, and over 30 recommendations on specific topics (including the roles of tourism, governance, spiritual values, gender, poverty, CCAs, and mobile/indigenous people in protected areas). All of these outputs strongly stressed the central role of communities in

¹ *Community Conserved Areas: A Bold Frontier for Conservation* see http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/ceesp_briefing_note_9_iccas.pdf.

² For more information, pl. see: <http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/ceesp/wg/tilcepa/>; Borrini-Feyerabend et al 2004; Kothari 2006.

conservation, by respecting their customary and territorial rights, and vesting them with decision-making authority. The biggest breakthrough was the recognition of CCAs as a valid model for conservation³.

The Seventh Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004, had governments all over the world committing to move towards participatory conservation with the recognition of community rights. One of the main outputs was a detailed and ambitious Programme of Work (POW) on Protected Areas, which incorporated provisions on ‘Governance, Participation, Equity and Benefit Sharing’. The POW requires all countries to recognise various governance forms for protected areas, including CCAs. Since the CBD is a legally binding instrument for signatories, the POW is of great significance in making countries identify, recognise and support CCAs⁴.

Given this, it became necessary to get an idea of the kind of CCAs and their status across the globe. And it is in this context that this project was carried out by Kalpavriksh. The idea was to get an overview of CCAs in the South Asian region (including India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan. Bhutan could not be covered as an appropriate partner could not be found, but we did receive an overview paper, findings of which are included in this report. The project did not include Maldives.

This study was undertaken in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka through 2008-09 and has been supported by Swedbio. Local partners from each respective country were selected. The general objectives of the study included:

- Deepen the understanding of the CCA phenomenon with respect to the types of CCAs that can still be found in the South Asian region, or are newly emerging, and their status.
- Analyse these initiatives, distil and discuss lessons learned and policy implications.
- Bring together community representatives, government officials, NGOs, and individual experts to discuss the case studies and lessons, and work out a regional plan of action.

The partners selected for the project were:

Pakistan: Tahir Rasheed, National Project Manager, Habitat & Species Conservation Project, Sustainable Use Group, Asia

India: Neema Pathak, Kalpavriksh

Bangladesh: Anwarul Islam, Professor, Department of Zoology, University of Dhaka

Sri Lanka: Anandalal Nanayakkara, Attorney-at-Law

Nepal: Sudeep Jana, Research Consultant, CDO and Forest Action

³ http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/pa/pa_event/wcpa_wpc/

⁴ www.biodiv.org/meetings/cop-07/default.asp

Project Benchmarks

Planning Workshop, Pune-India (August 25-26, 2008)

The main objective of this meeting was for partners to meet, get a common understanding of CCAs and agree on timelines. The meeting started with a brief introduction of the project and participants. The concept of CCAs was then re-visited for a common understanding. This was followed by an overview of the TILCEPA Legal CCA reviews, the proposed global CCA project and the Protected Areas Programme of Work. Experience sharing of CCAs from partner countries was a major agenda item. The meeting concluded with a visit to a CCA situated in close proximity to Pune.

Selection of the Advisory Committee

The project team also selected an Advisory Committee of sixteen people from the relevant countries and some others who have played a crucial role in taking the concept of CCAs forward internationally. The Advisory Committee has been kept apprised about the project throughout and has played a crucial role in guiding the process as also asking the key questions to ensure greater clarity.

Partner Progress Reports and Selection of Case Studies

The next phase consisted of partners reporting back on progress and also sending us the selected case studies that they would be focusing on as part of the project.

The following sites were selected for case studies:

Pakistan: Two sites, one each in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan (NWFP) and Balochistan respectively were selected as case studies. These include: The Tooshi Community Reserve in Chitral (NWFP) and Torghar in Qillasaifullah, Balochistan. Tooshi lies in the foothills of Hindukush range in the Northeast of the main town Chitral at a distance of 16 Km while Torghar is a well known community reserve situated 65 Km northwest of Qillasaifullah district.

Bangladesh: The following sites were selected: i) Pochamaria village bamboo grove, Natore; ii) Shakhidarpara village, Joypurhat; Baghchari (Danabindhu Karbari Para), Rangamati; iii) Bayazid Bostami Shrine, Chittagong; iv) Nabiganj and Kushiara, Bandar, Narayanganj; and v) Baikka Beel, Hail Haor, Sreemangal, Moulvibazar.

Nepal: The two sites selected were: Tau Daha, a natural sacred lake in the Kathmandu Valley; and the Bajra Barahi Religious Forest that is an ancient religious forest is located 3 k.m to the east of Chapagoan, a village of Newari ethnic group in Lalitpur district. Two other sites also being considered are in the Chepang Hills and a wetland called Roopataal.

Sri Lanka has looked at the Provision enabling CCAs rather than identify individual sites at this stage. Within the present legal framework there are very few provisions that promote CCAs. The Forest Ordinance provides for the declaration of 'village forests'. These are declared for the use of certain communities and the villagers have limited management functions therein. The Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act provides for the management of fisheries management areas by defined fisheries communities. However, both the above examples of possible CCAs cannot be traced on the ground in that they have not been

established in this context. Another example of CCAs can be found in the temple lands being managed in terms of the provisions of the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance.

India: The following sites were selected: i) Baripada village, Dhule district, Maharashtra; ii) Nagavalli area, Karnataka; iii) Dzongu region, Sikkim; iv) Select CCAs in Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Mizoram.

Country Visits by Project Coordinators

Project coordinators visited three of the five South Asian countries. Visas for Pakistan could not unfortunately be obtained. These visits were made with the purpose of meeting relevant people in the communities, government and NGOs who are working or would potentially help in taking the issue of CCAs forward at the country level. Visits also included travel to some of the sites that were being documented as case studies in the respective countries.

Following is the schedule of visits:

Bangladesh (Dec14-29, 2008)

Nepal (Jan.04-09, 2009)

Sri Lanka (Jan.16-22, 2009)

The project team followed a different schedule for India and instead of visiting specific sites, team members attended a workshop organised by the India partners in North east India. This was one region that had been focussed upon under this project.

Receipt of Draft Country Reports

This was followed by country partners sending draft reports for team comments as also from Advisory Committee members. These reports were subsequently revised for final submission.

Country partners provided information in the formats provided by us. We did request a review of element 2 of the PAPoW but that did not happen. We were also unable to get any preliminary information on the role of CCAs vis-a-vis climate change but we think that needs to be a more detailed analysis of the same.

Participation in International Workshops

Select members from the Advisory Committee, project coordinators and several community members from the South Asian countries were supported to attend two significant international events during the project period.

Workshop on Traditional Agricultural Landscapes and Community Conserved Areas, at International Congress on Ethnobiology (Cusco, Peru, 25-30 June 2008)

As part of the 11th International Congress of Ethnobiology that took place in Cusco, Peru from June 25 to 30, 2008, TILCEPA and PLTF organized a session entitled "Traditional Agricultural Landscapes and Community Conserved Areas". This was co-coordinated by Ashish Kothari of Kalpavriksh/TILCEPA and Jessica Brown of QLF/PLTF. The session, spread over 4 days, consisted of presentations on the history, cultural and technological practices, knowledge systems, and other aspects of agricultural landscapes managed by indigenous peoples and other local communities. A rich diversity of case studies were presented from Mexico, Spain, Peru, USA, Thailand, Bolivia, Taiwan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Brazil, South Asia, and Venezuela. The session also consisted of a full day's

field trip to the Parque de la Papa (Potato Park) where 6 Quechua indigenous communities are conserving their landscape for optimizing ecologically sustainable, biologically diverse farming and pastoralism. Apart from indigenous participation in the session, there were also evening interactions with a separate indigenous-only section of the Congress.

While ongoing experiences on CCAs from the South Asian region were inputted into the session, it is expected that the key learnings from the workshop will feed back into CCA work in the South Asian region, particularly in advancing the notion of agrobiodiversity landscapes. Travel for Ashish Kothari as an Advisory Committee member was supported through this project.

World Conservation Congress Oct. 05-14, 2008, Barcelona

The IUCN World Conservation Congress, held every four years took place in Barcelona from October 05-14, 2008. Five participants including the coordinators were supported by the project to attend this event. The Congress proved to be a good venue for many of project partners and Advisory Committee members to meet and to get an update on project activities. A few formal and informal meetings were held during this event to discuss project related issues. More than 6,600 leaders from government, the public sector, non-governmental organizations, business, UN agencies and social organizations discussed, debated and agreed on solutions for the world's most pressing environmental issues.

Key Emerging Issues from Country Reports

Nepal

- Scale of CCA is important in its effective management. Most CCA types in Nepal are smaller in geographic scale with an exception of the Kanchanjunga Conservation Area. However it definitely does not imply that only small scale can be effectively managed but to highlight the fact in many occasions small CCAs are manageable for local people.
- Existence of CCAs is more likely to sustain when they have religious and cultural values associated with it. Religious and cultural values can effectively generate local stake for conservation.
- Livelihood security or benefits especially to local people is one of the integral aspects of CCAs in Nepal. The emergence of many CCAs and its sustenance has been significant to local livelihoods. However in most of the cases they have a strong repercussion and result for biodiversity conservation.
- Supportive recognition of existing CCAs and those potential ones can offer immense opportunities to widen the scale and scope of existing protected areas coverage in Nepal. They are critical spaces for connectivity between protected areas. Extension of existing PA boundary may often faced with constraints and local costs; recognizing existing and those potential CCAs could therefore be an effective strategy to widen the scope of area under PA coverage as well as legitimizing community control over the areas being conserved.
- The process of recognition needs to be democratic; and should engage local actors and right holders, amidst atmosphere of mutual trust and healthy dialogue and most

importantly continuation and security of rights enjoyed by the local custodians of conservation.

- Support to CCAs could be an effective strategy to address poverty as well as livelihood necessities while at the same time garner popular support for the cause of conservation.
- In a hierarchical Nepalese society embedded in unjust social structures; democratic institutional arrangement for governance and management of CCAs that secure; representation and justice to marginalized social groups can be challenging.
- Tenure security is critical to sustain and support CCAs and advance its potentialities.

Bangladesh

- A thorough study is required to ascertain aerial extent, type, nature and status of the CCAs. Awareness has to be raised among the general people and the policy makers about the significance of CCAs.
- CCAs should be part of the PA network of the country and should be properly backed up by policy and legal instruments as CCAs may be one way to increase PA coverage in the country.
- Climate change, biodiversity and land degradation aspects should be well integrated into the CCA management strategic and programme framework.
- CCA governance should be well linked and integrated with the protected area management systems. This can also be identified as a strategy for territorial expansion of the protected areas.
- In addition to government systems, it is very important to establish and nourish non government, academic and research institutions for proper and neutral monitoring and evaluation. They can also play pivotal role in providing policy inputs for strengthening overall governance of the CCAs

Sri Lanka

- Both ancient and modern CCAs can be observed in Sri Lanka. Particularly those CCAs which are related to religious institutions could be of an ancient type, being based on the ancient land grants given by the kings. In some instances, ancient CCAs, that were related to religious institutions and objectives and which had been abandoned, have been revived due to cultural and religious resurgence. New CCAs also emerge due to felt needs of the community as well as State or NGO initiatives.
- No survey has been carried out in respect of each type of CCA in Sri Lanka. As stated above, CCAs in Sri Lanka are usually not recognized in the context of community managed areas with conservation significance and so no surveys have focused on their biodiversity potential. This is an important matter that merits further study urgently.

- Where CCAs exist they fulfill several objectives. The primary objectives with their attendant types could be summarized as follows:
 - Conservation – Turtle Conservation Projects.
 - Religious – Aranyas and temple lands over natural forests.
 - Water Supply – Protection of community water sources, stream reservations within tea and rubber estates.
 - Irrigation water – Rehabilitation of Small tanks and catchment area protection and enhancement.
 - Livelihood – Fisheries Management Areas and Turtle Conservation Projects
 - Subsistence – Home Gardens

- No statistics are available that indicate the commonest types of CCAs in Sri Lanka. However, of the various types the most frequently encountered are the CCAs related to religious institutions and religious objectives. Whist their prevalence could be one factor for them being encountered more, another reason could be that the religious institutions wield more power and influence than other sections of the community and are more acceptable to the authorities and thus are out in the open. Another significant factor is perhaps that in the CCAs related to religious institutions, the presence of the institutions provides an entity that the officials could deal with directly. The fact that a community is a loosely defined entity may act as a deterrent to official recognition. Thus the CCAs linked to religious institutions are more prevalent and are also able to obtain official recognition readily.

- In Sri Lanka, the core natural resources are usually under State control. This is true for forests, the ocean and the sea shore, flowing water etc. Hence the single most important condition in determining the overall success of the CCAs in Sri Lanka is continued State patronage which on the face of it may seem contradictory to the concept of CCAs. However, sans State patronage and particularly in the face of direct opposition from the State, it is unlikely that any CCA in Sri Lanka would continue successfully. This patronage could be in the form of actual legal provisions, a lease, permit or even enabling provisions in the law. Following up on this observation is the fact that the most direct threat to CCAs is the absence of an enabling legal regime.

- Carry out a thorough survey of the main types of CCAs in Sri Lanka together with ground surveys combined with a study of the legislative and policy background as applicable to each.

- Based on the survey, identify priority CCAs representing the main CCA types for support. Rather than financial support which may create an unhealthy dependence, this support could be in the form of technical and other support.

- Parallel to supporting the initiatives, document and record it and develop a replicable model.

- Initiate a process for the incorporation of the CCA concept into the policy and legal framework in Sri Lanka.

Pakistan

- Although each CCA has a history and an informal or formal structure to look after the day to day affairs of their respective areas, however majority of these have no management plans and resources to either develop these plans or implement them. Detailed management plans for each CCA should thus be developed.
- The present uncertainty in the management of CCAs is due to the absence of concerted efforts on the part of the government to extend legal status to community role in the management and sidestep the customary laws once practiced effectively to manage such areas by local communities.
- Indigenous management systems need to be reactivated and blended with the latest model to ascertain maximum results.
- Emergence of conflicts is a routine phenomenon when it comes to participatory management of natural resources. Regrettably no serious efforts were made both by government and conservation NGOs to understand the nature of conflicts and to devise a comprehensive conflict management strategy. A conflict management strategy needs to be developed and implemented.
- Despite some efforts to educate local communities and other stakeholders regarding the importance of natural resources and issues faced, lack of awareness level remains one of the main obstacles in managing CCAs.
- Conservation of biological diversity by virtue of its integral role in sustaining livelihoods and other dynamics of human survival is essential. The existing structures and adopted framework for conservation are weak and inefficient both in its approach and enforcement. In rural community especially in mountain rural community the local population heavily dependent upon biological resources more specifically on floral resources for a variety of daily needs due to the fact that the alternate options are neither available nor within the purchasing power of resource short communities. Livelihood options thus need to be diversified.
- Availability of a well equipped and trained human resource is a prerequisite for the better management of CCAs.
- Women of the CCAs should be engaged in the decision making process of modern CCAs keeping in view their constructive role in the management of such areas. Religious leaders, activists, notable and CCA management should be encouraged and engaged to soften different cultural as well religious values and taboos that are mainly blamed for this neglect.

India

- A sense of belonging or custodianship towards the area, resources or species being conserved is one of the most important factors in the decision of a community to start and carry on conservation efforts. Security of tenure of the land being conserved, or the confidence that they could continue with their initiative irrespective of the legal ownership of the land, is key to a successful community initiative.

- Uniform and straitjacketed models of development and conservation are not sustainable. Community initiatives are decentralised, site-specific and varied in their objectives and approaches. This is in contrast to most government efforts, which have largely been centralised, top-down and working under uniform legal and management prescriptions, not taking site peculiarities into account, though many officials have tried breaking through the mould to design locally adapted initiatives. However, making laws and policies flexible as well as firm and strong against misuse of the flexibility is a tricky question, and will involve serious debates and explorations.
- Conservation of resources by communities is a part of livelihood insurance and is linked with other social dynamics. Conservation initiatives can lead to other social reforms in the village, e.g., equity, empowerment, etc. On the other hand other social processes such as efforts towards generating empowerment may lead to initiation of conservation. Conservation, therefore, cannot be seen in isolation from other social, economic and political processes within the community.
- Areas conserved for biodiversity do not exist in isolation and are impacted by various social and political forces and land-use practices in their surrounds. Allowing resource-intensive activities in the surrounding areas could put more pressure on the biodiversity of the area to be protected. It is extremely important to orient regional planning towards the ecological and cultural dimensions of an area, including community conservation efforts. A community's wish to conserve a certain area needs to be respected and reflected in the regional planning.
- Good governance is increasingly being seen as an important factor in ensuring the success of any conservation effort. A transparent and democratic process of decision-making leads towards a more successful effort and long-term sustainability than situations where decisions are taken by a small minority through non-transparent means. The emphasis on equal representation of all sections of society in information sharing and subsequent decision-making is one of the unique features of many successful initiatives. Consensus-based decision-making is used in many CCAs.
- In nearly all CCAs, a strong link between conservation and local livelihoods emerges. Local communities necessarily bring in elements of their livelihoods into the equation. In a few cases they may decide to completely forego any direct livelihood benefits (e.g., in the sacred groves). In most cases, however (and given other favourable factors), they will tend to integrate conservation and livelihoods, deriving substantial and subsistence ecological benefits, or considerable direct extractive benefits.

Bhutan

Note: This country was not included in the study but we did receive an analytical piece on the status of CCAs in Bhutan. An excerpt is added.

Bhutan boasts 72% forest cover and is recognized as a Biodiversity Hotspot by conservation scientists and organizations. The country is often touted as a model of conservation and sustainable development. Many theories have been put forward as to why Bhutan is able to conserve its biodiversity and not follow the rest of South Asia in a downward spiral. The country's largely Buddhist population is often cited as a major reason. Another is the

country's general isolation and late entry into the modern market economy only in 1960. Yet another is its small population of less than 700,000 people. Perhaps all of these did play a role. However, a critical missing element is the role that people played in managing and using the natural resources of the country. Prior to 1960, the entire forest and natural resources of the country were managed, used, and 'owned' by the common people of Bhutan as Community Conserved Areas. This allowed the people to manage and use the resources on a sustainable basis. The older generations then bequeathed an almost pristine ecosystem to the Bhutan of today.

By the late 1950s however, the government started to nationalize forests and increasingly took control of this valuable resource. Extraction and sale of timber contributed significantly to the national exchequer. Prior to this, the government's revenue base was taxes levied on the people in terms of grain and labour. Forests were completely nationalized by the late 1960's. However, starting in the late 1990's this trend saw a mild reversal as priorities for government revenue shifted from forests to hydropower and tourism. In a paradigm shift, As of August 2009, 160 community forests have been established with an area of some 20,000 hectares or about 0.71 percent of Bhutan's forest cover. In community forests villagers are increasingly allowed to use and extract resources without permits from the forestry department. This according to the draft National Forest Policy of 2008 is in keeping with the country's recent change to a democratic political system. The gist of the policy is to give more control over natural resources to communities. However, given vested interests and increasing market value of resources, especially minerals and timber, a complete return to the traditional management system may be unlikely even with a new forest policy.

Regional Workshop on Community Conserved Areas in South Asia, 4th -7th Aug'09, Kathmandu

One of the main activities of this study was to organize a workshop at the regional level to bring together at a regional scale the various learnings that have come out of this study and to plan for the way forward.

The workshop was also part of another project of Kalpavriksh entitled "Recognising and Supporting Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas in South Asia and Globally". The main objectives of this project are:

- to build on existing ICCA documentation and processes in South Asia with a series of consultations on issues of national recognition, and international databases;
- consolidate the ICCA information at a South Asia level;
- coordinate a series of legal assessments of national measures for ICCA recognition; and
- provide technical inputs to the development of a ICCA registry at the World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

Towards this end Kalpavriksh, India and Forest Action Group, Nepal co-organised a regional workshop on Community Conserved Areas in South Asia, on 4th-7th August 2009, under the sponsorship of SwedBio and GEF/UNDP Small Grants Programme. This workshop aimed to bring together community representatives, non-government organizations and government representatives from different South Asian countries.

A total of 45 participants attended this workshop. Participants ranged from government representatives; members from relevant NGOs, both national and international, to local community representatives from all the relevant countries. There were a total of 15 local community members. Important government representatives included the Forest Secretary from the Balochistan province of Pakistan and the Secretary, Forests (now Secretary, Environment) from Nepal. The main language of communication at the workshop was English with parallel translations in other regional languages. .

The agenda of the workshop covered the following topics:

- An opening presentation about CCAs (the overall demystifying/understanding CCAs). The presentation covered some of the key aspects and criteria for CCAs; challenges; the IUCN PA matrix and governance types; benefits arising from recognition; and key needs to be addressed.
 - An introduction to the CCA South Asia survey.
 - An orientation relating to the international scenario that included international agreements such as the CBD Protected Area Programme of Work and UNDRIP, and ongoing work happening in international networks like TILCEPA.
 - Detailed presentations from the various countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka). The presentations included case study scenarios; the overall CCA status; laws and policies; key issues and the proposed way forward for each of these countries. These presentations were made by country partners and community representatives attending the workshop. The presentations were followed by an open discussion.
 - A presentation was made listing the progress of implementation of the CBD Protected Area Programme of Work vis-à-vis accepting CCAs legally in the countries. The listing was commented and revised with the inputs from the various participants.
 - Key issues emerging from various countries were discussed in detail.
 - A presentation and discussion on the proposed WCMC Global Database on CCAs.
 - A discussion on taking the work forward through an action plan, regional and country networks, linkages with other projects etc.

Key Emerging Issues from Country Presentations and Discussions

1) Legal and policy Issues

The need to ensure that the rights and access of communities would remain intact while providing legal recognition was highlighted. Some participants felt that putting community initiatives into a structured system could threaten these initiatives. The issue of tenure rights came up repeatedly, and some local communities agreed that CCAs need to be endorsed by government to be effective. The need to recognise different kinds of indigenous institutional and management structures, along with traditional knowledge was acknowledged. It was pointed out that some systems already in place lack the devolution of power originally envisaged. Some participants felt that the recognition of CCAs may cause conflict with existing PA system in some cases (e.g. where law specifically excludes community settlements from PAs).

Key points that emerged were:

- Various forms and mechanisms/processes of legal recognition need to be recognized.
- Whether CCAs should be considered PAs in the first place or they should be incorporated in the PA systems.
- Tenure, benefits of legal recognition, kind of structure, spaces for customary law, jurisdiction issues etc.

2) The Appropriateness of CCAs in Different Contexts

While CCAs are important for acknowledging the role that communities have been playing in conservation, the need for creating awareness about role of CCAs came up strongly. It was clarified that that not all community-based initiatives are CCAs and the local context/situation is important. It was further discussed and clarified that CCAs may not necessarily promote “hands-off” protection.

Conservation may not be the primary objective. The objectives may be cultural or spiritual. The need for clearly defined indicators that can be used to relate or compare CCA characteristics with the existing protected areas was discussed at length. Demanding recognition of CCAs should be dependent on the interests of indigenous/local communities, i.e. whether they want it or not. Another important perspective was that of the possibility of reconciling traditional with modern institutions to improve the efficacy and functioning of CCAs. Fleshing out the incentives and disincentives for local communities to participate in CCAs was also highlighted.

The key points under this section can be summarized as follows:

- The manner and process adopted to give recognition to CCAs needs to be defined.
- Differentiating between different community-based natural resource systems which can/cannot be qualified as CCAs is important.
- The governance structure and the power of deciding the form of the governance structures themselves is critical.
- Documentation of the kind of ecological conditions amenable to CCAs.
- Assimilating the immense diversity in the community initiatives including origins, practices, and objectives.

3) Criteria/Procedures to Identify CCAs (in addition to the three main criteria proposed by the IUCN).

It was felt that general (international/national) criteria identified could be problematic because of wide variation in local contexts. To work around this a set of criteria should be put down to streamline the process of recognition of CCAs and eliminate ambiguity as far as possible.

Key points from this section could be summarized as follows

- Identifying specific criteria and indicators for determination of suitable CCA sites to avoid misunderstanding and conflicts.

- Distinguishing between criteria for selection or definition of a CCA and needs for ongoing support.

4) Additional Support Possible for CCAs Beyond their Identification and Legal Recognition (i.e., financial, technical, economic/livelihood, political, etc.).

A number of points were highlighted within this section, including the different kinds of recognition possible; the support to be provided and by whom; and the role of the government in the entire process. It was suggested that value addition of CCAs be analyzed in detail. It was also suggested as a strategy that, support should be linked with the challenges and threats faced by CCAs in general.

Some of the support mechanisms discussed were:

- Legal status for CCAs
- Framework for joint implementation
- Human resource development
- Document and reaffirm cultural dimensions of conservation
- Involve indigenous communities in conservation policy and planning
- Clarify and protect international property rights of local/indigenous communities

5) Determine if CCAs are Achieving Biodiversity Conservation (both scientific and institutional dimensions)

Emerging points from this section are:

- What does it mean for a CCA to have potential to achieve biodiversity conservation?
- Is there a particular set of criteria or indicators that can be used?
- How do we as practitioners and advocates deal with uncertainty in CCA biodiversity outcomes, in terms of planning and assessment?

6) Institutional Mechanisms for CCAs

Key points raised on this issue included who determines governance arrangements in the first place. Relevant points brought up were in regard to the conflict resolution mechanisms in place - both for the community and for the government. Some felt that it would be better to work with the government to get its support for initiatives to be effective. On the other hand it was felt that there should be ways and means devised contextually to ensure that the government is taking appropriate action. On the issue of punitive action, some participants felt that communities should have authority for deciding the same.

Key emerging points under this section are:

- Level of community participation in decision making
- Conflict resolution mechanisms
- Ensuring government is active and taking appropriate action,
- Ensuring effective overseeing at all levels by the community

7) Role of CCAs within a larger landscape

The need for transboundary landscape-level initiatives that incorporate ICCA concept was articulated. Communities can play a key role in the evolution of larger landscape institutional arrangements.

Discussion on the proposed WCMC Global Database on CCAs

There was a very intense discussion on WCMC database documenting ICCAs. Participants raised a number of concerns both about what it would mean for the communities and how this process would be operationalised. Questions were varied. Would the database favour communities which have contact with people like us and thus a skewed representation? What would it mean for CCAs trying to seek national recognition? Would it lead to conflicts with the national governments (considering that we discussed in detailed how CCAs could get support from government agencies)? Would it create conflicts among communities? What would be the process of verification and so on. After much discussion it was felt that there is a need to have a more widespread, inclusive and in-depth discussion on these issues within South Asia before we move ahead with the database. It was decided to have a time bound e-mail discussion (first two weeks of September) with some of the participants and others suggested by the participants.

The Way Forward

Both speakers and participants from the various countries noted that theirs was a preliminary documentation, and much more needed to be done to identify and document CCAs. A plan of action was worked out by the participants. Some of the follow-up action includes

- a) Dissemination of the reports and participant listing.
- b) Finalising the national reports by the end of August.
- c) Organizing national workshops on CCAs in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.
- d) Furthering documentation work on CCAs at the national level in the countries.
- e) Having a focused e-discussion group on putting CCAs on the Global database (WDPA)
- f) Continue the discussion on the key issues that have come out from the workshop, to improve understanding and communication of on-ground situations for various countries.

Site Visit

The workshop was followed by a one and a half day site visit to Rupa wetland or Rupatal spanning 115 Ha being the third largest lake in the Pokhara Valley⁵ of Nepal. This site has been documented as part of the Nepal country survey. The wetland has been conserved and managed by Rupa Lake Restoration and Fisheries Cooperative (*RLRFC- Rupa Tal Punar Sthapana Tatha Matchya Palan Sahakari*). Conservation also extends to the surrounding catchment forests through the community forestry groups. Here the co-operative provides resources to the respective villages to encourage conservation. The participants of the workshop were able to interact with the members of the cooperative. There were some pertinent questions on the management practices of the cooperative vis-à-vis conservation

⁵Ramji Adhikari, executive committee member was interviewed by Rup Narayan Dhakal, Himalayan Times, Pokhara Bureau.

objectives but a more detailed study and discussion would be needed for this, to analyse Rupatal as a potential CCA.

Our Learnings and the Suggested Way Forward

This project has facilitated a lot of learning across the region and also amongst us. The time for the study was also just right as CCAs begin to gain more recognition across the globe and become an important tool contributing to the conservation of biological diversity. As a logical follow up, is another project that Kalpavriksh is involved in entitled “Recognising and Supporting Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas in South Asia and Globally”. This project will help take some of the learnings of the present project to the next level. A key feedback we received from most partners was that the time budgeted within the project was too short and needed to be extended to enable more analysis, documentation and internal review.

The final regional workshop provided an ideal platform for informal and formal interaction and exchange of ideas and experiences with a range of stakeholders. Frequent regional interactions could be considered as a possible way of networking and also information sharing and capacity building to strengthen the concept and working of CCAs.

It might also be useful to carry out similar studies in the countries of Bhutan and Maldives for a complete South Asian perspective.

We see as a final outcome of this project, a set of publications that include one with an overview essay and the country reports and also a set of policy briefs for each country documented.

We would finally like to thank SwedBio for financial support for this project.