

BRITISH COUNCIL – GOING GLOBAL 2013

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Session 3.1, Panel Debate: *Importing knowledge systems to solve local problems – is this the most effective solution?*

“Linking Indigenous Knowledge Systems to Development in Africa”

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Africa and the MDGs

- According to 2012 MDG Report, Africa will not achieve several of key MDGs by 2015
- Development in Africa heavily supported by foreign assistance, mainly from North
- External funding accompanied by imported knowledge
- Africa should use technological experiences of North, but should embed indigenous knowledge in its development strategies

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Africa's Development

- Africa has rich body of indigenous knowledge, used for hundreds of years to solve developmental & environmental problems
- Well-documented examples of positive impact of IKS on Africa's development
- For example, cases documented by World Bank in its Indigenous Knowledge for Development Programme launched in 1998
- IKS can also assist Africa in coping with climate change

Threats to IKS in Africa

- Difficulty in verbal transmission of IKS from older generation to younger, scientifically-educated one. When older generation passes away, knowledge lost
- Reticence in using IKS by scientists, politicians and development experts: IKS anecdotal & not scientifically supported
- Rapid changes due to imported economic, cultural & political developmental models
- Urgent need for protecting and documenting IKS – by creating a database

Institutionalising IKS

- Some work done by African universities on IKS, but work rather disparate
- African Journal on IKS, *Indilinga*, published bi-annually
- Need for dedicated IKS centre in African universities, e.g. Centre at Univ of Botswana & CoE at 3 universities in South Africa
- Another model: creation of national centre e.g. CEIKS in Ghana, also covering West Africa

Protection of Indigenous Knowledge Rights

- Indigenous communities concerned about appropriation of their knowledge by researchers in and out of Africa
- Under WTO, copyrights and patents are accelerating use and privatisation of indigenous knowledge
- But IPR, appropriate for commercial inventions and granting exclusive rights, not appropriate for indigenous knowledge
- Protecting rights & privileges of IKS holders is complex – Africa should learn from experiences in other regions

Post-2015 Development Agenda

- In shaping post-2015 development agenda, it is vital to integrate IKS in development process
- Global support for IKS in Africa seems to be waning e.g. World Bank & Nuffic
- Donors & development agencies must support Africa's development through IKS
- IKS could be a fruitful area of collaboration between Africa and China & India:
 - protection /promotion of IKS through institutionalisation
 - Translating IKS into national developmental plans
 - Protection of indigenous knowledge rights



THANK YOU