

# World Alliance on Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP)

## Briefing Notes on Mobile Peoples & Conservation

Version 2, September 2004

The term mobile peoples (e.g., nomadic and transhumant pastoralists, hunter-gatherers, shifting agriculturalists, seasonally mobile floodplain and delta inhabitants and sea-nomads, and other peoples with dynamic regular changing patterns of land use) encompasses those indigenous peoples whose livelihoods depend on extensive common property use of natural resources and whose mobility is both a management strategy for dealing with sustainable use and conservation and a distinctive source of cultural identity.

The 5th World Parks Congress (Durban, South Africa, 2003) was the first to include representatives of mobile peoples from



many regions of the world. Building upon the principles set out in the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation ([www.danadeclaration.org](http://www.danadeclaration.org)), they actively participated in the Congress, identified common concerns shared by indigenous peoples and agreed to integrate the term 'indigenous' into the official name of their group, thus expressing their solidarity with the larger and well-established indigenous and

tribal peoples movement world-wide. Representatives of mobile indigenous peoples pointed to the unique needs, perspectives and conservation benefits deriving from their cultures and mobile lifestyles and formed the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP) to promote solidarity among themselves and a friendly policy environment leading to the respect of their rights and the restoration of their cultural identity and mobile livelihoods in balance with nature.

WAMIP discussed examples of protected areas that alienated lands and resources traditionally used by mobile peoples, with consequent



loss and erosion of their livelihoods and cultures and severe land degradation outside of the protected areas. Even in some co-managed protected areas, mobile peoples' rights have been ignored and "participation" has been granted to sedentary people only. And yet evidence shows that mobile use of natural resources can be very "bio-friendly", and that mutually reinforcing partnerships between mobile peoples and protected areas managers can be essential for both livelihoods and the long-term ecological viability of the conservation initiatives.

Sensible to the WAMIP arguments and testimonies, the Durban Accord, approved at the 5th World Parks Congress, voiced concern that "many places which have been conserved over the ages by mobile indigenous peoples were not given, today, appropriate recognition, protection and support." It urged commitment to "involve them in the creation, proclamation and management of protected areas and to establish mechanisms that guarantee their share in the benefits arising from these areas."

WAMIP members were present at the Seventh Conference of the Parties (COP 7, February 2004) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and actively participated in several events. WAMIP and other indigenous peoples' representatives were gratified by the inclusion

of a provision urging the CBD parties to "establish policies and institutional mechanisms to facilitate the legal recognition and effective management of indigenous and local community conserved areas..." with a note that gave special reference to nomadic communities and pastoralists. The Programme also instructed parties to "promote an enabling environment (legislation, policies, capacities, and resources) for the involvement of indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders in decision making, and the development of their capacities and



These briefing notes have been prepared by members and supporting members of WAMIP. Pictures courtesy of P. Khosronejad, A. Bourbouze, A. Siapouh and G. Borrimi-Feyerabend. WAMIP's secretariat is provided by the Iranian NGO CENESTA, which produced these notes. Contact: Aghaghia Rahimzadeh at aghaghia@cenesta.org. These notes were produced with the encouragement and support of:

opportunities to establish and manage protected areas, including community-conserved and private protected areas.”

Building upon this increasing recognition and aiming at a mutually rewarding alliance between mobile indigenous peoples and conservationists, WAMIP is strongly recommending that IUCN members, who will gather at the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress in Bangkok on 16-25 November, approve the relevant resolution on Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation. Excerpts from proposed text for the resolution follow:

## Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation

### Motion for a resolution at the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress, Bangkok, Thailand

NOTING that since time immemorial, mobility is an effective component of community strategies for the conservation of wild and domestic biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources; MINDFUL of the Millennium Development Goals and STRESSING that globalisation, violent conflicts and policies of mobility restriction and sedentarisation have deprived mobile indigenous peoples of access to natural resources, affected their cultural identity and capacity to manage natural resources, and have led them in many cases to poverty; The IUCN at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, November 2004

1. ENDORSES the principles of the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation;
2. REQUESTS the Director General to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources by mobile indigenous peoples through:
  - a. ASSISTING the IUCN members in the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas by providing support to understanding the relationship between mobile indigenous peoples and conservation, including their knowledge and skills on the sustainable use of natural resources;
  - b. DEVELOPING exemplary projects and programmes where mobile indigenous peoples participate fully and effectively in managing land



Box 1. RESTORING A COMMUNITY CONSERVED AREA OF NOMADIC PASTORALISTS— Livelihoods, nature conservation and cultural identity

The Kuhi— one of the Shish Bayli Sub-tribes of the Qashqai nomadic pastoralists of southern Iran— are engaged in participatory action research about their own “sustainable livelihoods” and the conservation of biodiversity in their landscape. Their action-research refers to a resource management unit comprising their summering and wintering grounds and their associated migration routes in between. The Kuhi have held several workshops and the first concern was to involve the whole community. One of the major problems identified was the breakdown of the traditional organisational strength of the tribes. They analysed their governance situation in some depth and decided to recreate their autonomous organisation in a manner that would be able to respond to modern challenges, including notions of participatory democracy. Extended negotiations among them led to the “Council for Sustainable Livelihoods of the Kuhi Migratory Pastoralists” and its associated Community Investment Fund, which is now pursuing initiatives in each of the 5 categories of problems/ needs identified by the Sub-tribe. Such initiatives include support to range management and animal raising, improving marketing for the internationally appreciated rugs and *gabbehs* produced by women, health care access, solar energy applications for various uses, access to legal support and access to educational books and videos. The new idea that excited them the most, however, is about restoring natural resources to their common property care and control.

A unique opportunity in this sense is the **Chartang-Kushkizar Wetland**, extending some 9 kilometres in length, shared between the Kuhi and the Kolahli Sub-tribes. This has been a community con-

served wetland from time immemorial. The Kuhi know all too well that they obtain many “ecosystem benefits” from this wetland, including water reserves, reeds for handicrafts, fish, medicinal plants, micro-climate control, and wildlife. The government has earmarked part of the area in a controversial plan to be divided up among households for agricultural use. The newly constituted Council believes it is better to preserve this area as a “*qorukh*”—equivalent to a “*hema*”—a community conserved area. It has thus submitted a petition and a proposal to the relevant government authorities to formally declare the wetland and the surrounding rangelands as a **Community Conserved Area** with use rights being regulated by the Sub-tribe elders. The petition is currently being reviewed and has received widespread support in the government. In terms of IUCN categories, the overall CCA covering the Kuhi wintering and summering grounds together with the access routes, could be considered as a category V (“landscape management” objective), with the wetland portion under category II (“ecosystem management” objective).

This initiative is showing important ways in which nomadic livelihoods can fully reconcile with conservation. The initiative is supported by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CENESTA), a national NGO in Iran, the Organisation for Nomadic Peoples of Iran (ONPI, a government institution), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), IUCN/CEESP’s Working Group on Sustainable Livelihoods, FAO (interested, among other things, in coping strategies of nomadic pastoralists in the face of drought) and GEF Small Grants Programme.



upon their traditional resource management systems for conservation and sustainable use;

3. REQUESTS all IUCN Commissions, within their mandates and programmes, to give due recognition to mobile indigenous peoples and their special capacities, needs and rights, and
4. REQUESTS in particular the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) to articulate appropriate policies, practices

and mechanisms for:

- a. information sharing and Prior Informed Consent regarding protected areas and MIPs;
- b. ensuring, that the rights and capacities of mobile indigenous peoples (e.g., access and benefit sharing) are dealt with intelligently and in ways that ensure biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods;
- c. recognising mobile indigenous peoples' community conserved areas as a protected area governance

- d. type that builds upon their customary and evolving institutions and norms and contributes to landscape and seascape conservation;
- d. supporting conflict management among mobile and sedentary communities and other partners including through co-management approaches;
- e. facilitating cross-border mobility and trade in transboundary protected areas by mobile indigenous peoples who have traditionally lived in and used those areas.

## Box 2. CONCEPTUAL ELEMENTS under discussion for a GEF/UNDP Action Plan:

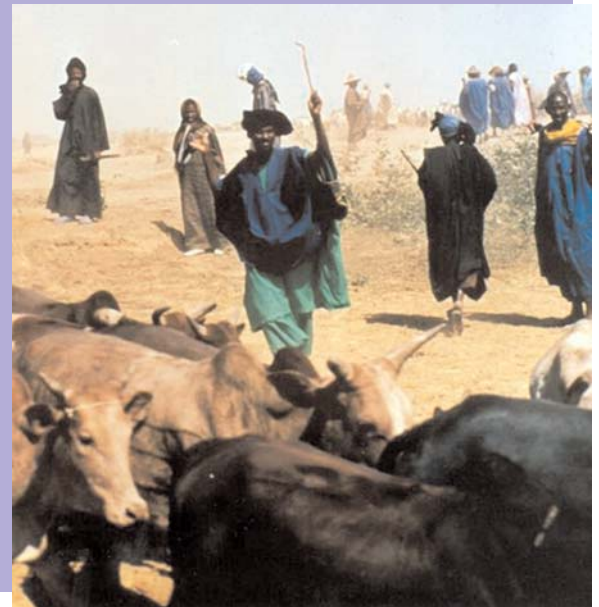
Mobile pastoralism is ecologically, economically and socially important for sustainable development in drylands. Recently, there has been a spontaneous revival of transhumance in southern Europe and CIS countries. The recognition of the economic and ecological viability of mobile pastoral systems in Africa and Asia has enormously increased. The Action Plan we support does not advocate "turning the clock back" nor "freezing" pastoralists in their current state. It advocates appropriate policies, legal mechanisms, and support systems that allow self-evolution of pastoralists towards economically, socially and ecologically sustainable livelihood systems. Some of its conceptual elements currently under discussion are:

1. **Property Rights and Legal reform.** The drier the ecosystem, the more incentive there is to manage the natural resources communally. Property rights and legal reform need to recognise tenure forms that are relevant to pastoral mobility. There are examples of national laws for the promotion of nomadic pastoralism that can be emulated.
2. **Policy Incentives.** Policy bias and disincentives have to be redressed. Pastoral Codes are innovative mechanisms to address these issues, but must not become single-sector policies.

3. **Strengthening Management Systems.** Although traditional mobile systems continue to be viable, many have been modified or their effectiveness reduced because of land use changes, economic disincentives and policy distortions leading to a gradual abandonment of traditional rules and skills. These need to be redressed.
4. **Communication and conflict resolution.** Pastoral communities practicing extensive production are often on the margins of society, both socially and politically. This marginalisation often leads to conflicts, including rebellions and civil wars. Mobile pastoral communities need to be recognized and included as viable parts of society.
5. **Decentralisation.** Although decentralisation has advanced rapidly in many parts of the world, mobile pastoralists continue to be marginalised in the process even when sedentary populations are given the tools and means to benefit from it. Decentralisation should not be carried out at the expense of pastoral mobility and must adapt to mobile peoples.

6. **Mobile Services and Markets.** Both the content and the structure of markets and services should be adapted to mobile peoples. Many innovative forms of mobile services exist and have proven to be viable.

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*A group of concerned professionals including social and natural scientists from all regions of the world met in Wadi Dana Nature Reserve, Jordan, 3-7 April 2002, to consider a comprehensive approach to Mobile Indigenous Peoples and conservation. At the end of this meeting, they agreed the following declaration:*

The world faces unprecedented threats to the conservation and sustainable use of its biodiversity. At the same time, its cultural and linguistic diversity, which includes an immeasurable and irreplaceable range of knowledge and skills, is being lost at an alarming rate. The linked pressures of human population dynamics, unsustainable consumption patterns, climate change and global and national economic forces threaten both the conservation of biological resources and the livelihoods of many indigenous and traditional peoples. In particular, mobile peoples now find themselves constrained by forces beyond their control, which put them at a special disadvantage.

Mobile peoples are discriminated against. Their rights, including rights of access to natural resources, are often denied and conventional conservation practices insufficiently address their concerns. These factors, together with the pace of global change, undermine their lifestyles, reduce their ability to live in balance with nature and threaten their very existence as distinct peoples. Nonetheless, through their traditional resource use practices and culture-based respect for nature, many mobile peoples are still making a significant contribution to the maintenance of the earth's ecosystems, species and genetic diversity - even though this often goes unrecognised. Thus the interests of mobile peoples and conservation converge, especially as they face a number of common challenges. There is therefore an urgent need to create a mutually reinforcing partnership between mobile peoples and those involved with conservation.

In the light of this understanding, we commit ourselves to promoting conservation practices based on the following principles:

### Principle 1. Rights and Empowerment

Conservation approaches with potential impact on mobile peoples and their natural resources must recognise mobile peoples' rights, management responsibilities and capacities, and should lead to effective empowerment. These rights include:

- 1.1 Human rights: civil, political, social, economic and cultural;
- 1.2 Land and resource rights, including those under customary law;
- 1.3 Cultural and intellectual property rights;
- 1.4 The right to full participation in decision-making and relevant negotiation processes at different levels;
- 1.5 The right to derive equitable benefits from any consumptive or non-consumptive use of local natural resources. To this end, appropriate legislative reforms should be promoted as needed, at national and international

levels. In addition, because mobile peoples often move through different territories, transboundary co-operation between national authorities may be required. Recognition of mobile peoples' rights should lead to effective empowerment, and include consideration of gender and age.

### Principle 2. Trust and Respect

Beneficial partnerships between conservation interests and mobile peoples should be based upon mutual trust and respect and address the issue of discrimination against mobile peoples. To this end partnerships should:

- 2.1 Be equitable;
- 2.2 Fully respect and acknowledge mobile peoples' institutions;
- 2.3 Balance the exercise of rights by all parties with the fulfilment of responsibilities;
- 2.4 Recognise and incorporate relevant customary law;
- 2.5 Promote the accountability of all parties in relation to the fulfilment of conservation objectives and the needs of mobile peoples.

### Principle 3. Different Knowledge Systems

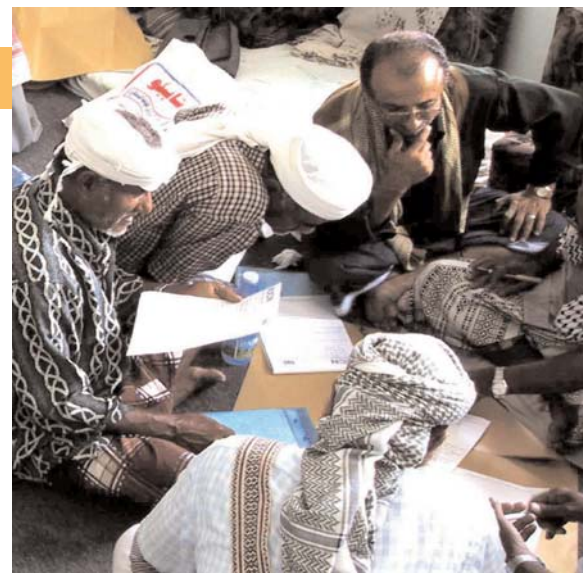
In planning and implementing conservation of biodiversity with mobile peoples, there is a need to respect and incorporate their traditional knowledge and management practices. Given that no knowledge system is infallible, the complementary use of traditional and mainstream sciences is a valuable means of meeting the changing needs of mobile peoples and answering conservation dilemmas. In particular:

- 3.1 Traditional and mainstream sciences and management practices should enter into dialogue on a basis of equal footing and involve two-way learning;
- 3.2 Traditional and mainstream sciences should be appropriately valued and their dynamic nature acknowledged.

### Principle 4. Adaptive Management

Conservation of biodiversity and natural resources within areas inhabited or used by mobile peoples requires the application of adaptive management approaches. Such approaches should build on traditional / existing cultural models and incorporate mobile peoples' worldviews, aspirations and customary law. They should work towards the physical and cultural survival of mobile peoples and the long-term conservation of biodiversity. More particularly, such adaptive management approaches should:

- 4.1 Build on areas of common interest between the chosen lifestyles of mobile peoples and the conservation objective of sustainable resource management;
- 4.2 Allow for diversification of livelihoods, and ensure provision of a variety of benefits at all levels, including mobile services;
- 4.3 Recognise the diversity of systems of tenure



and access to resources, including the customary sharing of resources;

- 4.4 Recognize and support the contributions made by mobile peoples to conserving and enhancing the genetic diversity of domesticated animals and plants;
- 4.5 Learn from the flexible management practices of mobile peoples to enrich conservation;
- 4.6 Develop conservation planning at a larger landscape scale, using the notion of mobility as a central concept, and incorporating both ecological and cultural perspectives.

### Principle 5. Collaborative Management

Adequate institutional structures for adaptive management should be based on the concept of equitable sharing of decision-making and management responsibilities between mobile peoples and conservation agencies. This is only possible if the existing decision-making mechanisms for biodiversity conservation become more democratic and transparent, so as to allow for the full and open participation of civil society and mobile peoples in particular, and for the establishment of co-management and self-management systems. This requires that the relevant parties:

- 5.1 Develop processes and means that foster cross-cultural dialogue directed towards consensual decision-making;
- 5.2 Incorporate culturally appropriate conflict-management mechanisms and institutions;
- 5.3 Recognize the time-scale appropriate to cultural processes and the time required to build intercultural partnerships for adaptive management;
- 5.4 Foster locally agreed solutions to conservation problems;
- 5.5 Encourage diverse and pluralistic approaches to conservation planning and implementation;
- 5.6 Develop their capacities to enter into mutually beneficial partnerships.

This declaration is our contribution to narrowing the disciplinary divide. The ideas in it need to be tested, refined and further developed in dialogue with mobile peoples themselves and others.