

Strong roots

for sustainable development

'Local and indigenous knowledge' refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life.

This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, rituals and spirituality.

These unique ways of knowing are important components of the world's cultural diversity, and provide a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development.



Marie-Claude Matter Müller

A Yanomami boy of the Upper Orinoco, Venezuela, looks for honey in a hollow tree trunk. The Yanomami have names for more than fifty bee species that provide a great variety of nutritious and medicinal honey. They know the specifics of different types of hives (found at the top or the base of trees, or inside tree trunks or fallen logs) for which they use different honey gathering techniques.



Narumon Hinshiranan

Within the confines of a national marine park in the Surin Islands, Thailand, the Moken people (sea nomads) are exploring options for sustainable livelihoods. Women are the primary gatherers of the intertidal zone, using their in-depth knowledge of this environment to collect vital sources of food, such as sea urchins, molluscs, crabs and fish.

A sailing canoe of the Maskelyne Islands, southern Malekula, Vanuatu, returns from food gardens on the mainland. Traditional navigational skills, based upon knowledge of stars, swells, winds and animals, continue to underpin the sea journeys made by Pacific Islanders.



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Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems
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