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In this issue

- LMMAs in Madagascar
- Statement of UEIM students & professors

MIHARI Network: The voices of coastal communities from Madagascar

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The past decade has seen a groundswell of interest in community based marine conservation in Madagascar, with *locally managed marine areas* (LMMAs) being championed at the highest levels of government, and now covering over 12% of Madagascar's seabed. However, located in remote coastal areas, the majority of LMMA implementing communities in Madagascar is isolated and has limited opportunities for communication and exchanges with other LMMA managers.

Inspired by the Pacific LMMA network, Madagascar's first national LMMA forum was held in June 2012 bringing together community representatives from 18 LMMAs with the aim of addressing these problems through peer-to-peer learning and sharing of experiences. This event resulted in the creation of Madagascar's national LMMA Network called: "MIHARI", an acronym, which stands for "MItantana HArena an-dRanomasina avy eny Ifotony". The MIHARI network was created as a way of linking up isolated coastal communities to allow community leaders to share ideas and successful models through peer-to-peer learning, as well as to represent the interests of small-scale fishers in national policy development.

MIHARI is a platform, bringing together all coastal communities involved with marine resource management and the organizations that support them. The network currently includes over 150 individual LMMAs with discrete management structures and rules supported by more than 20 partner institutions.

Since its creation, MIHARI has grown as a way of promoting the spread and successful development of LMMAs, and aims to address the systemic challenges faced by communities by facilitating and supporting collaboration amongst a range of actors, to foster the exchange of best practices, to increase the visibility and legitimacy of LMMA, to reinforce the voices of coastal communities, to address important skills gaps for LMMA leaders and the capacity of management groups.

The core activities of the MIHARI network are to facilitate learning exchanges between fishing communities and forums bringing together LMMA managers and wider stakeholders. Fisher exchanges are a powerful tool in the spread of fisheries management practices and governance. Informal peer-to-peer experience sharing has been an integral part of the spread of community-led octopus fishery management measures along the southwest coast of Madagascar. We have also witnessed the role of these exchanges in building leadership and engagement in management efforts.

Further to that, regular forums bring together community leaders representing LMMAs all around Madagascar's coast. These forums are being held both at the regional and national level. They allow leaders to share their experiences, success stories and challenges encountered; in addition, they foster a sense of community spirit and solidarity between LMMA communities. Three annual national forums have been organized so far, and this year, four regional forums were held grouping communities with a similar context. Ongoing communication tools through local radio are being developed to maintain regular communication and sharing of stories outside of these events.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

Submissions are welcome from all civil society groups.

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Statement of students and professors of the Intercultural University of the State of Mexico (UIEM)

on the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols

Endorsed by the Intercultural University of the State of Mexico, UIEM, the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, IFFB and the Indigenous Women Biodiversity Network in Latin America and the Caribbean, RMIB-LAC

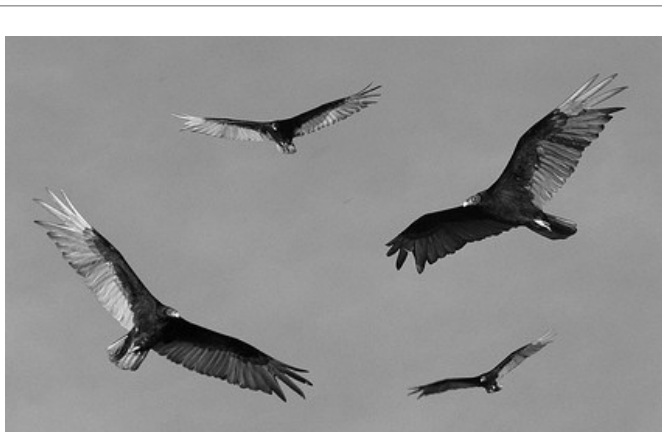
Cancun, 2 December 2016: We, indigenous students, and professors of the Intercultural University of the State of Mexico (UIEM) inform that in the month of November 2015 a training workshop on indigenous women, the Nagoya Protocol and small businesses was held at the UIEM through a Memorandum of Understanding between the UIEM and the Indigenous Women on Biodiversity Network of Latin America and the Caribbean, RMIB-LAC. In that workshop facilitators of the RMIB-LAC, Ms. Florina López and Dr. Yolanda Terán shared their knowledge about the Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8j and the Nagoya Protocol. Thanks to the invitation and training of the RMIB-LAC, a group of six indigenous women are attending the meetings of the COP13 to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols held in Cancun in December 2016. In this context, we wonder to what extent the linkages between our educational center and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities is fully and effectively contributing to the recognition, revitalization, care, protection and defense of our traditional knowledge and biodiversity and its ecosystems.

In this regard, in our capacity as Indigenous students and professors we present the following statement:

As transmitters of culture and guardians of seeds and biodiversity, we take for granted that the earth, air, water and light and heat from the Father Sun are creators and providers of life. Therefore, we promote an attitude of coexistence, harmony and gratitude for their generosity that is the basis of our focus on conservation of Mother Earth and humanity.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are holders of several thousands of years of information and cultural heritage and collective knowledge that are transmitted orally from generation to generation. All indigenous and non-indigenous researchers that carry out researcher with commercial and non-commercial purposes must comply with the guidelines of community protocols and make ethical use of the knowledge that is taken from our Peoples. Therefore, it is the duty of every researcher to inform Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities on the methodology used in the investigation, assess the relevance of the method according to social, cultural and environmental circumstances and recognize Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities as the owners of this knowledge when carrying out scientific research that includes thesis, manuals, scientific articles, books, trademarks, patents among others. In the event of co-publications, they shall recognize the co-authorship of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and establish the number of articles and books that will be printed. In addition, if such research derives in projects that generate monetary income, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities shall be involved in a fair and equitable benefit-sharing process through mutually agreed and clearly defined terms.

In order to defend and protect our Mother Earth its ecosystems and our traditional knowledge, intercultural universities of Mexico together with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities must participate in the revaluation and appropriation of traditional knowledge and in the creation of tools to promote an authentic dialogue of knowledge, collective research, and actions towards getting the well-being for all.



*Are the vultures circling over the lagoon?
Or over the remains of Risk Assessment ?*