

# RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT OF ICCAs IN IRAN

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Case study for:  
RECOGNISING AND SUPPORTING  
TERRITORIES AND AREAS CONSERVED BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES  
Global Overview and National Case Studies

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## List of acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CID	Community ICCA Declaration
DOE	Department of the Environment, Office of the President of the Republic, Iran
EU	European Union
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
FRWO	Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Management Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPS	Global Positioning System
ICARRD	International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, FAO, Porto Alegre, Brazil, March 2006
ICCAs	Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Territories and Areas
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IPs	Indigenous Peoples
INTs	Indigenous Nomadic Tribes
LCs	Local/Traditional Communities
NEE	Non-Equilibrium Ecosystems
NIMSSP	National ICCA Multi-Stakeholder Support Platform
(P)GIS	(Participatory) Geographic Information System
TBSRM	Territory-Based Sustainable Range Management Programme
UNDP/GEF/SGP	United Nations Development Programme/ Global Environment Facility/ Small Grants Programme
UNDP-DDC	United Nations Development Programme– Dryland Development Centre
UNICAMEL	Union of Indigenous Camel Herders of Iran
UNINOMAD	Union of Indigenous Nomadic Tribes of Iran
WAMIP	World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre

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## Summary

Iran is a vast country in southwest Asia covering an area of over 1.6 million square kilometres. It lies on the world's arid belt and 85% of its land area comprises arid and semi-arid regions harbouring rangelands, high- to low-density forests and deserts. Overall, natural ecosystems cover about 80% of the country's surface area, or 130 million ha– including 14 million ha of forest (nearly 9%), 85 million ha of rangeland (nearly 52%) and about 33 million ha of desert (about 20%). The population of Iran was estimated by the World Bank at about 75 million in 2011 with 69% in urban areas and 31% as sedentary local communities and indigenous nomadic peoples in rural areas<sup>4</sup>. Various ethnic groups– including Arab, Baluch, Gilak, Kurd, Lur, Persian, Turk and Turkman– have different cultures, languages, traditions and customary systems of natural resource conservation and environmental governance.

The history of conservation by indigenous peoples (IPs) and local/traditional communities (LCs) goes back thousands of years and is based on their strong social organisation, identity, collective production, and adaptation of their governance and management systems to complex ecological conditions in forests, rangelands, wetlands, marine and coastal areas and for water, fisheries and wildlife resources.

Compared to this rich history, modern government management of forests and rangelands goes back only a century to the time of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. As part of this, the government has established 241 protected areas (10% of the national territory), including 25 national parks, 32 national nature monuments, 40 wildlife refuges and 144 conservation areas under the Department of the Environment (DOE). Other designations such as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites) are included in the same areas. In addition FRWO manages 131 reserves with a total area of over 111,000 ha. Of these, 19 are Natural Forest Parks, 91 are Forest Reserves, and 21 are Natural Parks.

Wooed by blind faith in 'modernisation' (in the sense of Europeanisation), successive Iranian political regimes and governments since 1921 have consistently attempted to weaken the customary institutions of natural resource management and livelihood systems. This applies especially to the 700 tribal formations– consisting of some 100 tribal confederacies and 600 independent tribes of the country. The governments have sought to achieve this through forced sedentarisation at gunpoint under Reza Shah (1921-1941), massive land grabs and cultural penetration under his son (1941-1979) as well as through policies of 'agrarian reform' and 'nationalisation' of natural resources using questionable grounds<sup>5</sup>. While post-revolutionary governments glorified the bravery and patriotism of nomadic tribes and their essential role in the Revolution<sup>6</sup>, the inevitable push for their sedentarisation came as soon as the Founder of the Revolution passed away. Thus in 1992 the Chair of the High Council of Nomadic Peoples, President Hashemi-Rafsanjani, declared his uncompromising policy for the sedentarisation of nomads. He ordered the elaboration of a 20-year Sedentarisation Plan and allocated considerable funds to this end through the Five-Year Development Plans. He

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

<sup>5</sup> It is seen later in this study that what is commonly thought to be the 1963 'Law' of Nationalisation of Natural Resources has turned out upon closer examination to be nothing more than a *decree* by the Shah's Council of Ministers in 1963.

<sup>6</sup> The late Imam Khomeini honoured indigenous nomads with the title of 'Treasures of the Revolution'. At the end of his life, in his political last testament, Imam Khomeini described the nomadic peoples as the Fourth Pillar of the Armed Forces in Iran (along with the Army, the Revolutionary Guards and the Police). See Khomeini, Ruhullah. *The Last Political and Religious Testament*. Tehran, 15 February 1983.

emphasised in his 1992 statement to the High Council that he wanted “*not a single tent-hold to be seen migrating in 20 years’ time*”<sup>7</sup>. It is therefore only through a remarkable feat of resistance and resilience that the governance systems of indigenous nomadic tribes and traditional communities in Iran have persisted to this day, with their unique territory-based ICCAs. This *mission and policy statement* effectively represented a 20-year *technocratic vision par excellence*, condemning nomadism to extinction by today....

And today, with the twenty-year deadline of ex-President Rafsanjani in his historic condemnation of migratory nomadism finished, and untold riches spent on this technocratic wild-goose chase, the indigenous nomadic tribal population of the country has not declined. On the contrary, while at the time of the utterance of this policy and dream of extinction in 1992 the number of tent-holds engaged in seasonal migration was about 200,000—today there are 212,660 tent-holds migrating—an effective increase of 6.3% in the number of migratory tent-holds!

As part of this process of resistance and resilience, the ICCAs of the IPs and LCs of Iran continue in a diversity of bio-cultural landscapes and ecosystems. These include a variety of wetlands, marine and coastal ecosystems, deserts, forests, rangelands and grasslands with their socio-economic, cultural, political and ecological values. The unique characteristics and values of these ICCAs are a powerful motivation for the promotion and revival of their natural resource governance and management systems in the ancestral / traditional territories of IPs and LCs. To this day the Indigenous Nomadic Tribes (INTs) of Iran can rightfully claim their territories to be indigenous conservation territories (ICCAs), and that the latter are therefore at least as old as the nomadic pastoral system in Iran, which is about 10-12 thousand years old.

The indigenous peoples and local/traditional communities of Iran have their own traditional norms, and customary practices (such as *qorukh*, *yurd*, *kham*) and unique spiritual beliefs regarding natural resources. These systems have sustained their way of life for thousands of years, but in the recent past, have been forced to face issues that threaten their very existence. Chief among these threats are two: the induced weakening of the tribal governance systems and the resultant fragmentation of their territorial ICCAs. These have in turn tended to result in the weakening of the ecological integrity of their territories.

Indeed the most significant aspect of this evolution (see Figure 1) is the fact that, despite the enormous pressure of defragmentation and breakdown on the indigenous nomadic tribes, their resilience and resistance to defragmentation is what meets the eye. Fortunately, in the last decade, some policy- and decision-makers as well as social activists working closely with the indigenous tribes have started a process of analysis that has brought some in-depth understanding to the problems of the past and are keen to gather legal and technical support for the governance and management capacities and institutions of indigenous peoples and traditional communities for natural resources at large, and for ICCAs in particular. In so doing they are applying new approaches and concepts in natural resource management such as: the Territory-Based Sustainable Range Management Programme (TBSRM); Non-Equilibrium Ecosystems (NEE) science; and the IUCN protected area governance ‘type D’ (ICCAs), as well as innovative and traditional mechanisms for the recognition of ICCAs. The latter has clear implications for the government to show progress towards Aichi Target 11 and therefore can provide additional incentives for government recognition of ICCAs. The innovative mechanism involves recognition by a hierarchy of structures ranging from a

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<sup>7</sup> Jom’e-pour, M., PhD, Acting Member, High Council for Nomadic Pastoralism, personal communication to T Farvar, March, 1992.

Community Declaration on ICCAs through UNINOMAD and relevant CSOs to a National Multi-Stakeholder ICCA Support Council to the global system including the ICCA Consortium and UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC). Discussions are going on with WCMC for this collaboration that will strengthen the national case and support their inclusion in national registries for Aichi Target 11 and other ends. An innovative interpretation of Article 44 of the Constitution<sup>8</sup> by officials of FRWO and DOE is tending to help in the devolution of governance responsibility *back* to IPs and LCs. Planned inclusion of specific components in the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan (such as the National Sustainable Range Management Programme) would enable support for TBSRM which is to be carried out by UNINOMAD and its Secretariat, and will make it possible for ICCAs to regain their prominence for conservation in the formal IUCN sense of the term (preservation of biodiversity, sustainable livelihoods based on the latter, in addition to restitution of any components that may be identified as necessary for maintaining the integrity of tribal ICCAs.

Government organisations such as the DOE and FRWO are member organisations of the 'National Steering Committee' of UNDP/GEF/SGP and have lent their support and approval to relevant GEF SGP projects focusing on ICCAs. In support of these projects there is a high level of collaboration amongst IPs/LCs, UNDP/GEF/SGP and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as well as relevant government organisations. SGP projects have focused on developing a better understanding of and support for the ICCA concept including building in components for preservation, restoration and sustainable use (livelihoods), awareness-raising, trust-building, debate, documentation, a Multi-Stakeholder Capacity Building Platform, advocacy, networking, and fostering of the recognition of ICCAs at all levels. All these have played a major role in moving forward the cause of ICCAs and establishing them as a serious phenomenon; and at times even a priority in the minds and agenda of authorities. A further by-product has been the mobilisation of support from international bodies both from inside and outside the country.

Strong efforts are being made for the promotion of ICCAs through solidarity among IPs/LCs. This has been achieved through social and economic strengthening of governing institutions at local levels (the nomadic camp, clan, subtribe, tribe and tribal confederacy) but also by establishing strong national organisations, such as the Union of Indigenous Nomadic Tribes of Iran (UNINOMAD) and the Union of Indigenous Camel Herders of Iran (UNICAMEL), and through mobilisation of indigenous nomadic tribal members of Parliament. These formal entities that represent the interests of IPs/LCs interact with policy makers and government authorities in promoting better understanding, recognition and support of ICCAs in the country. At the same time, the innovations mentioned above in the autonomous recognition process of ICCAs play a major role in opening doors to consultation of nomadic tribes and their participation in policy forums and processes.

Nevertheless, in Iran, governance and management rules for natural resources need reform to achieve full recognition and support to ICCAs. The concerned rightholders and stakeholders are actively seeking for appropriate solutions to this and recommend a roadmap that includes:

- Empowering IP and LC customary institutions (via renewed self-awareness, internal cohesion, engagement, and effective dialogue and collaboration with state agencies and with more powerful coalitions and federations at the national level) to stand up as

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<sup>8</sup> Article 44 of the Constitution defines the relations of the State, the Civil Society and the Private Sector in the Economy.

- legally recognised actors, capable of playing the major role in recognising the nomadic ICCAs, defending their territorial and other rights and positively influencing policy;
- ‘Appropriate integration’<sup>9</sup> of indigenous knowledge and ‘*relevant* modern science’<sup>10</sup> for the preservation, sustainable use and restoration of ICCAs in the five biomes of the country;
  - Developing a broad national legislative framework for participatory governance and management of rangelands, forests, wetlands and coastal areas, capable of accommodating ICCAs.

The vision for ICCAs in Iran is that they will be fully recognised as entities self-governed through their revived customary institutions and laws by their own long-time associated IPs and LCs and their re-empowered federations. Their role would be recognised for both preservation and restitution of biodiversity and its resources, as well as for the sustainable livelihoods of the relevant communities, and contribution to the local and national economy. Linkages between local and national organisations governing ICCAs would be as vibrant as those between international organisations and national entities involved in ICCA-supporting objectives.

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<sup>9</sup> Appropriate integration has the following characteristics:

- a) It respects the integrity of indigenous knowledge (IK);
- b) The holders of IK (mainly female and male community elders) will need to go through an empowerment process in order to have the self-confidence, institutional strength and community solidarity that are needed to cope with the unequal relations of power that characterise the ‘customary ↔ modern’ dichotomy;
- c) Likewise the holders of ‘modern science’ need to go through a process of awareness building to learn to respect IK and its holders as well as the limitations of ‘modern’ scientific methods and dogma-like claims and statements when dealing with traditional societies; and that every cosmovision gives rise to its own system of science; and that therefore IK is not necessarily any less valid than ‘modern science’, which is the result of a ‘Western’ cosmovision.

<sup>10</sup> A good deal of what is commonly known as modern science often proves to be inapplicable, irrelevant or simply wrong when coming face to face with the realities of traditional systems. For example while nearly all of rangeland ecology taught at universities and practiced by experts is an outdated system based on climax forest ecology, the new science of non-equilibrium ecosystems (NEE) is starting to gain ground in rangeland and grassland ecosystems as it is more in tune with the indigenous knowledge and practices of nomadic pastoralists. This is what we mean by ‘modern science’ and it must not be confused with much of the mainstream science that needs to go through its own transformation and revolution of relevance.

# 1. Country description and context

## 1.1. Key features of Iran

Iran is a vast country in southwest Asia extending over 1.6 million square kilometres. The country lies on the world’s arid belt and 85% of its land area constitutes arid and semi-arid regions, which are mainly rangelands, low-density forests and deserts. Iran has 130 million hectares of natural ecosystems (80% of the country’s surface area) including over 14 million hectares of forest (11%), 85 million hectares of rangelands (64%) and 33 million hectares of desert (25%)<sup>11</sup>.



**Map 1: Provinces of Iran**

(Source: [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iran\\_Provinces\\_2006\\_lg.jpg](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iran_Provinces_2006_lg.jpg))

**Table 1: Administrative divisions of Iran**

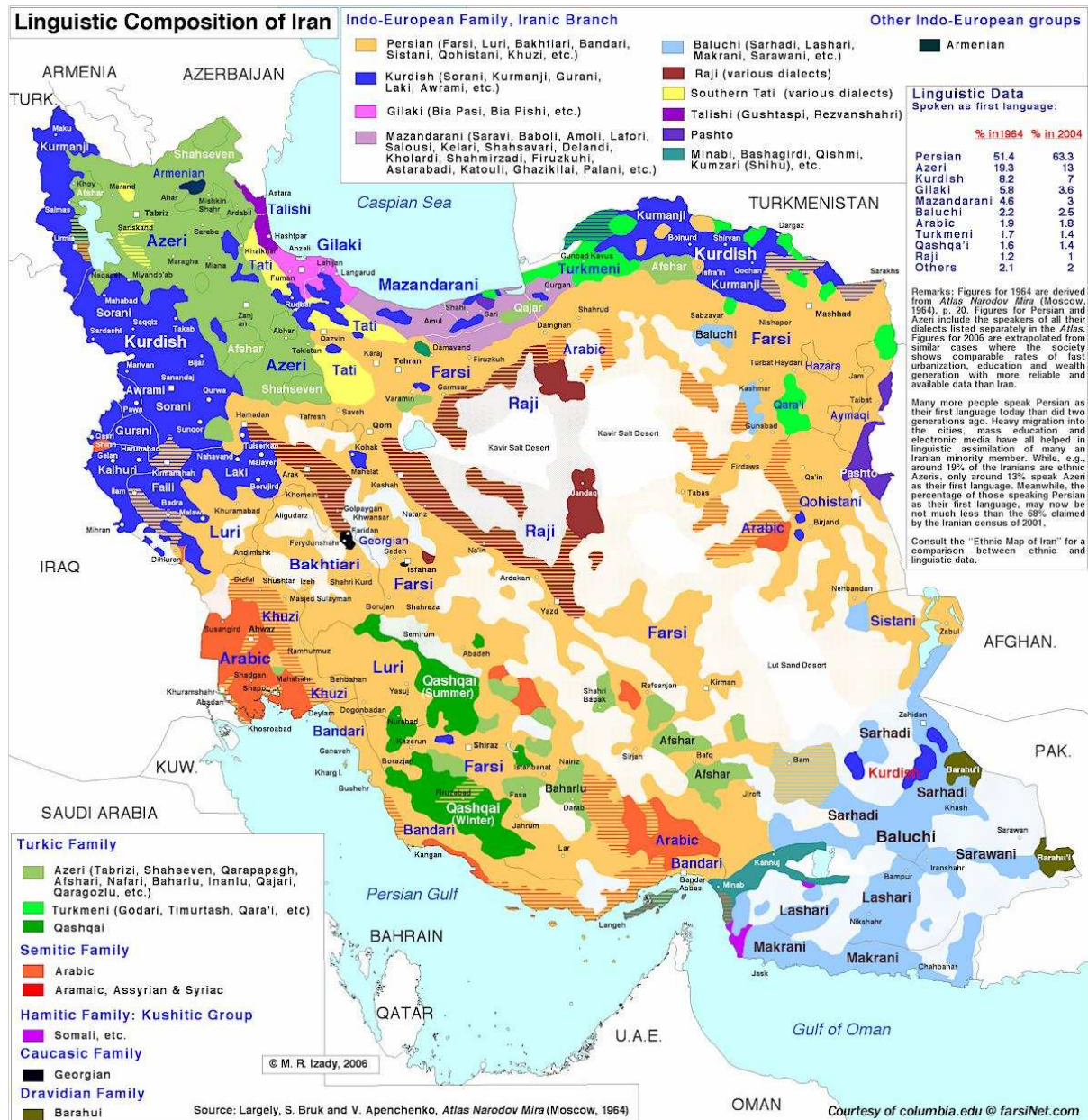
Division (in Persian)	English equivalent
<i>Ostan</i>	Province
<i>Shahrestan</i>	District
<i>Bakhsh</i>	Subdistrict
<i>Dehestan</i>	Village cluster
<i>Deh</i>	Village

The indigenous nomadic tribes identify themselves by their ancestral territory, which includes summering and wintering grounds and the migratory routes, without regard to administrative boundaries. They are normally not concerned with the administrative divisions, which are

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.frw.org.ir/CimayeManabeTabeeKeshvar/pageid/42/language/fa-IR/Default.aspx>



artificial political entities much akin to the international borderlines around most countries that are vestiges from colonial times. The provincial lines, for example, usually cut across the territories of indigenous migratory nomads and have no foundation in the life or history of the nomadic peoples. In reality, these borderlines cause enormous problems for the nomads. As provincial agencies of the central governments are involved in many decisions affecting nomadic peoples, including distribution of services (education, health, agricultural, veterinary, water, etc.), and reporting on- or interfering with- migration times and routes, military service, etc., and provincial offices of government are only empowered to deal with matters inside a province, much confusion, waste of time and conflict occurs due to geographically-based administrative divisions that ignore and go against the social grain of nomadic peoples.



Map 2: Cultural (linguistic) composition of Iran

Average annual precipitation in Iran is around 250 mm, which is less than one-third of the world average<sup>12</sup>. It is significantly different in terms of temperature, humidity and rainfall from place to place and season to season. The temperature generally decreases from south to north and from lowlands to highlands.

The population of Iran was nearly 75 million in 2011 of whom about 69% were living in urban areas and the remaining 31% were either sedentary local communities or indigenous nomadic peoples<sup>13</sup> (the latter is made up of some 1.2 million souls comprising over 212,000 tent-holds) (Statistics Centre of Iran 2009). The nomadic peoples are organised into about 600 independent tribes and a hundred tribal confederacies<sup>14</sup>. Iran's population consists of various ethnic groups, including Arab, Baluch, Gilak, Kurd, Lur, Persian, Turk, Turkmen and many others<sup>15</sup>. The diversity of these ethnic groups gives rise to many different cultures, languages, traditions and customary systems of natural resource conservation and environmental governance. Together with the five major biomes of the country, there is indeed a very rich heritage of bio-cultural diversity, which reflects itself in the diversity of Iranian ICCAs.

Iran's economy is a mixture of central planning, state ownership of oil and other large enterprises, community agriculture, and various scales of private trading, manufacturing, banking and service ventures. Its economic infrastructure has been improving steadily over the past two decades but continues to be affected by inflation and unemployment. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the service sector contributed the largest percentage of the GDP, followed by industry (mining and manufacturing) and agriculture. In 2006, about 45% of the government's budget came from oil and natural gas revenues, and 31% from taxes and fees<sup>16</sup>.

## 1.2. Brief history of conservation, state- and community-based

Before the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, which brought a more 'modern' form of government for the country, natural resource management and the conservation of nature consisted of two distinct levels of responsibility. Local communities and indigenous peoples—mainly the nomadic tribes— took charge of the governance and management of the vast living resources (forests, rangelands, wetlands, water, fisheries, wildlife and landscapes) using their traditional and indigenous knowledge and customary governance systems; while the State—mostly royal regimes— declared and maintained some hunting reserves but made no serious attempt at managing natural resources.

Then, a century ago, the new and 'modern government' took upon itself to 'modernise' also the management of forests and rangelands. In the forty-year period 1909-1948 a number of specialised governmental agencies were created through legislation, with a variety of names such as 'Roads, Mines and Forests', 'Forest Branch' or 'Forest Department'. The latter prepared and submitted to Parliament the first Forest Law in 1942. In 1948 the then Forest Corporation (governmental) was created "*to protect and preserve all state forests and pastures of the country*". In 1959, the Forests and Rangelands Law was passed and the State Forest Corporation was replaced with the Forestry Organization. The year 1969 saw the

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<sup>12</sup> March 2011 radio interview with Alireza Arasti, Manager, Exploitation of Irrigation and Drainage Networks of Iran's Water Resources, Tehran.

<sup>13</sup> See <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

<sup>14</sup> The usual social structure of nomadic pastoralists of Iran is, from the highest to the lowest levels of organisation: tribal confederacy (*el* or *i:l*), tribe (*tayfa* or *tayefeh*), subtribe (*tira* or *tireh*), clan (*bonku*, *göbak*, *owlaad*, *hu:z* or *tash*) and the nomadic camp (*oba* or *maal*).

<sup>15</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnicities\\_in\\_Iran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnicities_in_Iran)

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=122719>

establishment of the Ministry of Natural Resources, whose actions included the integration of agriculture and livestock breeding as well as various attempts at sedentarising the country's nomadic pastoralists— a pet project of both the Shah and his father as well as the current political system in the country. History has shown the sedentarisation policies to have proven themselves— everywhere and at all times— unsuccessful when not outright disastrous. After the dissolution of the Ministry of Natural Resources in 1971, the Forest and Rangeland Organisation was created and eventually renamed in 2002 to become the present Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Management Organisation (FRWO)<sup>17</sup>.

*(i) An official history of environmental protection in Iran*

The passing of the Conservation Law and the establishment of the Iranian Hunting Centre in 1956 are considered as the first documented action taken towards the protection of nature and wildlife. This led to the formation of a new government agency in 1967 entitled the Hunting and Fishing Organization, lodged within the Ministry of Agriculture.

In 1967 three national parks and 15 other government protected areas were established.

In 1972, in line with international initiatives brought on by the holding of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, the Department of the Environment (DOE) was founded in the Office of the Prime Minister, incorporating the Hunting and Fishing Organization (Darvishsefat 2006).

Definitions of protected categories in Iran

Iran's protected area system uses only four categories, which are defined below (Darvishsefat 2008):

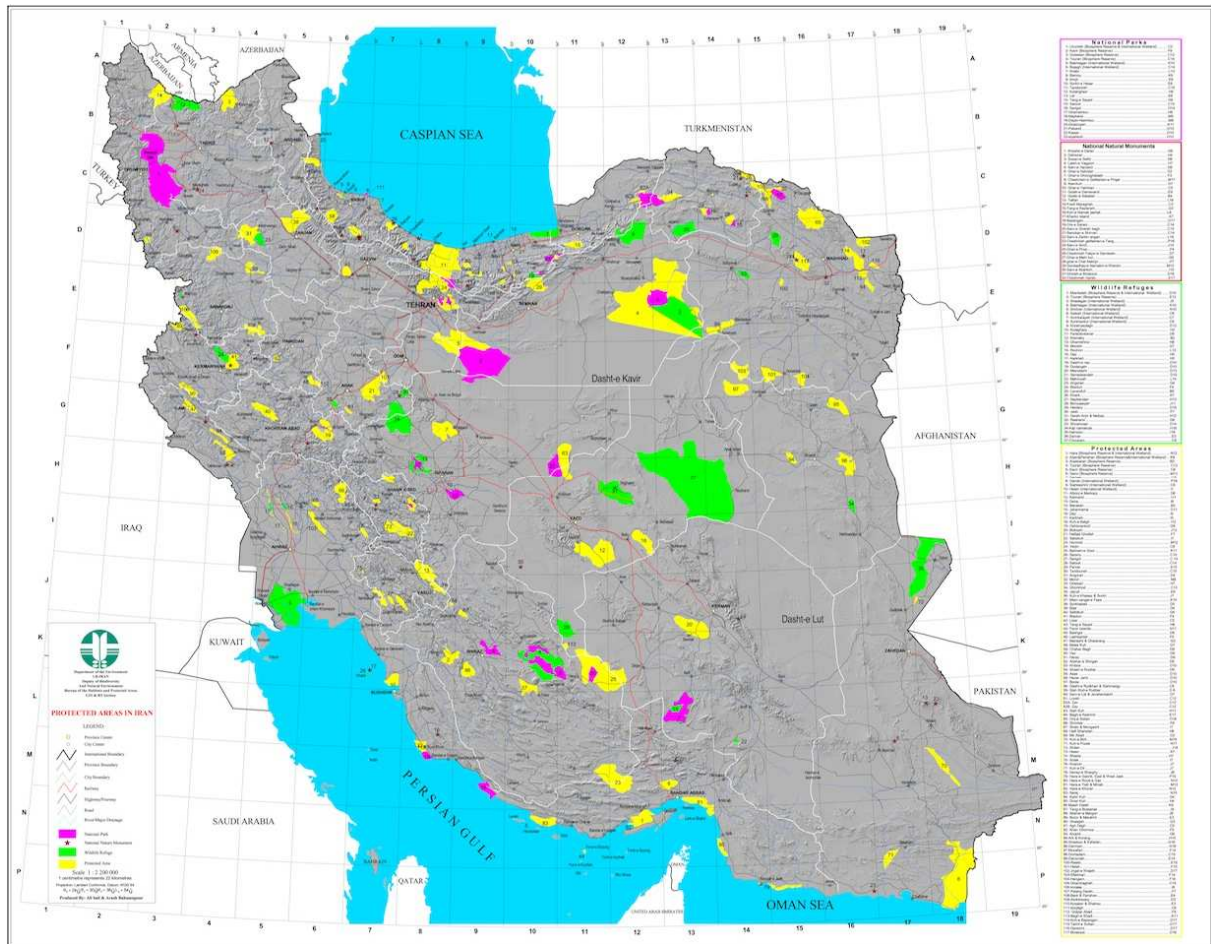
- *National park*  
Relatively vast natural areas having specific characteristics and national significance from the geological, ecological and bio-geographical points of view that are selected with the purpose of protection and improvement of the population of animal species and vegetation sites. National parks are suitable places for educational and research activities as well as for ecotourism.
- *National natural monument*  
Relatively small, unique, exceptional, unconventional and irreplaceable phenomena having significance from a protection, scientific, historic or natural points of view.
- *Wildlife refuge*  
Representative wildlife habitats selected with the purpose of preserving the population of animal species and improving their level of quality. These areas are appropriate places for educational and research activities. Compatible use and controlled tourism are allowed in refuges.
- *Conservation area*  
Relatively vast areas of high protection significance are selected with the purpose of preserving and restoring plant sites and animal habitats. Controlled tourism and economic uses under the management plan are allowed.

In 2011 Iran had some 241 government protected areas, including 25 national parks, 32 national nature monuments, 40 wildlife refuges and 144 conservation areas. These official protected areas have been established under the Department of the Environment (DOE), covering some 10% of the national territory. In addition to these four categories, other official protected areas have been declared by legal authority and are under DOE management. These

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<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.frw.org.ir/AboutUS/HistoryOrganization/pageid/37/language/fa-IR/Default.aspx>

include 110 no-hunting areas (7 million hectares), 84 national wetlands, 22 international wetlands (under the Ramsar Convention on the Protection of Wetlands and Migratory Birds) and 9 Biosphere Reserves (over 3 million hectares) under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme<sup>18</sup>. However, these additional designations do not imply additional areas under protection: they cover the same areas that were just reported.



**Map 3: Government-Managed Protected Areas of Iran**

(Source: <http://doe.ir/Portal/Home/Default.aspx?CategoryID=194f31a0-4030-446f-8a8a-3b49774ba52d>)

### Government management of forests and rangelands

As we have seen in the previous section, Government is responsible for Forests. The main duties of the present Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Management Organisation (FRWO) include:

- Protection, conservation and sound utilization of forests and rangelands and the development of planted forests and reseeded rangelands, as well as forest plantation development and reclamation of degraded forests and rangelands;
- Implementation of laws and regulations related to forests, rangelands, soil and coastal lands and other laws relating to the Forest, Range and Watershed Management Organisation;
- Research in the fields of forests, rangelands, soil and sand dune fixation<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://doe.ir/Portal/Home/ShowPage.aspx?Object=News&CategoryID=194f31a0-4030-446f-8a8a-3b49774ba52d&WebPartID=c200db07-8b3d-421e-b89f-9ef2c1af745a&ID=bdd87d5b-caaf-489f-90ae-33b9eb44ed5d>

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.frwo.org.ir/AboutUS/HadafVaVazayef/pageid/39/language/fa-IR/Default.aspx>

In addition, the Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Management Organization of the Ministry of Agriculture manage 131 reserves with a total area of over 111,000 ha. Of these, 19 are Natural Forest Parks, 91 are Forest Reserves, and 21 are Natural Parks. Furthermore, the other government agencies also manage a number of protected areas (such as the State Fisheries Corporation).

*(ii) History of governance and conservation of natural resources by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities*

Over thousands of years indigenous peoples and local communities have elaborated and perfected traditional knowledge and customary systems of governance, management and conservation of nature and its resources. These indigenous peoples and local communities, through the strength of their social organisations, as well as by learning from nature, have developed collective production systems that have enabled them to adapt their livelihoods to complex ecological conditions. As a result of strict adherence to the bio-cultural governance systems of IPs and LCs, natural resources and biological diversity were reasonably well conserved prior to the massive interference and domination by government policy, at least since the early twentieth century, and later by the private sector.

Successive Iranian political regimes and governments since 1921 have consistently attempted to weaken the customary institutions of natural resource management. This applies especially to the 700 tribal confederacies and independent tribes of the country. The government has sought to achieve this through forced or induced sedentarisation, massive land grabs and cultural penetration through the targeted alienation of tribal education. This was actually deliberately modelled upon the highly targeted and sophisticated system devised by the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the USA in the 1950s. In this way tribes were induced toward sedentary agriculture or ‘ranching’ styles of livestock breeding while the land that belonged to the tribes— often held in common, under the care of the tribal Chiefs and Councils of Elders— was confiscated. The greatest impact on natural resource management was dealt by the misguided policies of ‘land reform’ and ‘nationalisation of natural resources’, which were the hallmark of the 1963 ‘White Revolution’ of the Shah. As a result, the structures of nomadic tribal society and livelihood systems were brought to change in many significant ways. And yet, the governance systems of these indigenous peoples and local traditional communities have managed to resist and persist to this day— a feat of resilience indeed (CENESTA 2006).



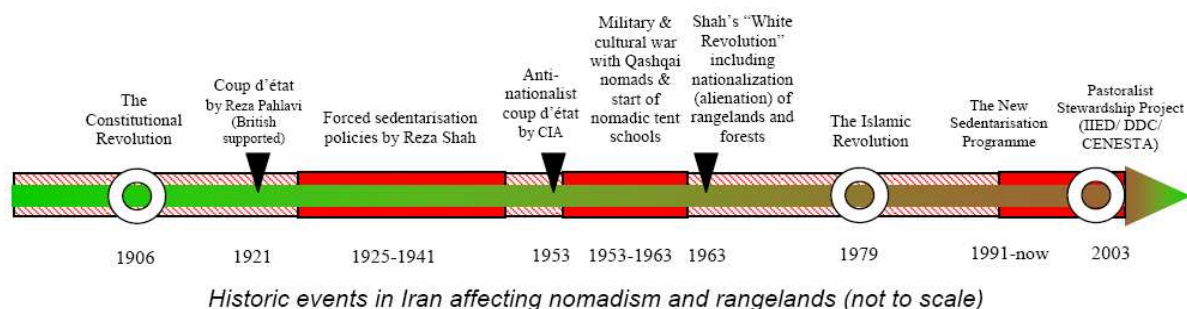
*Knowledge Sharing Platform: first session on indigenous knowledge, customary management and modern range science, March 2010. Several tribal elders, government experts & top directors, civil society leaders & academics are among the participants*

Courtesy: Ali Asghar [Abbas] Didari, CENESTA

Rangelands used to be managed and sustainably used by the nomadic tribes based on their wealth of indigenous knowledge and customary institutions. In addition, indigenous nomadic tribes have had their own ways of restoration of degraded rangelands based on their indigenous knowledge and customary management systems. Since the government authorities took charge, however, an obvious degradation of natural resources, particularly forests and rangelands, has ensued. It is now clear at least to some policy-makers that a different approach is needed, one that is based on the participation of indigenous and local communities. Some decision-makers would like to include in this the full recognition of ICCAs. They would then seek to integrate the indigenous knowledge of the tribes with the latest scientific findings in the field of range ecology, within the territory of each nomadic tribe. They would further try to ensure the full and effective participation of registered and formally recognised organisations representing the tribes, and the facilitation of NGOs (CENESTA 2010).

Figure 1 (below) highlights policy and political changes of the last century with important impact on the indigenous and community governance of natural resources in Iran and on the rights of indigenous nomadic tribes over their territories and ways of life. The emerging model was based on the ostensible resolve of different political regimes and their respective governments to ‘modernise’ (meaning ‘Westernise’) the country. This model relied nearly exclusively on imported development styles and insisted on the sedentarisation of nomads and the usurping of their largely common property through nationalisation and privatisation. These policies and practices, often presented as ‘agrarian reform’, had a devastating impact on the nomadic lifestyle and have been threatening the age-old capacity of nomadic pastoralists to conserve their natural resources and biological diversity (CENESTA 2011a).

**Figure 1: Political and policy changes impacting nomadic tribes’ governance of natural resources and ICCAs in the past century**



**Legend**

Symbol	Description
⊙	Revolution or drastic change
▼	Coup d'état
■ (Red)	Forced or induced sedentarisation
▨ (Hatched)	Normal trend of the times
▬ (Green to Yellow)	Timeline

### Natural resource governance & management by indigenous nomadic tribes

Today, despite the attacks received and the losses suffered, the nomadic communities of Iran are still alive and are making serious efforts to restore the integrity of their customary territories and ICCAs, prevent their further fragmentation and develop sustainable and productive management systems for their fragile territories. These efforts make a significant contribution to national conservation as well as the national economy<sup>20</sup> while preserving the traditional systems of ICCA and community-based natural resource management.

## 2. Features of ICCAs

### 2.1. Range, diversity, and extent of ICCAs

In Iran, as in many other nations, the prevalence of ICCAs in different biocultural landscapes is such as to make it the ubiquitous rule rather than the exception (CENESTA 2008). For example, from the point of view of the nomadic pastoralists, the entire territory of each tribal unit (ranging from the smallest unit of *oba* or *maal*— nomadic camp— that is made up of a number of affiliated tentholds, to the levels of the clan, the subtribe, the tribe and the tribal confederacy) has been considered a *qorukh* or *qoroq* (*hima* or ICCA) with its own rules of conservation and protection including exclusion, inclusion, regulated access and use rights and sanctions. A similar situation has held in the realm of the traditional sedentary rural communities who have been subject to strong traditional rules and regulations of resource use and conservation. Thus a larger unit of territory-based ICCA such as that of a tribal confederacy consists of a number of smaller (tribal) territory-based ICCAs, which, in turn, is made up of a set of subtribal, clan and nomadic camp territory-based ICCAs. This is how most of the huge territory of the land known as Iran came to survive and prosper in terms of both livelihoods and nature and natural resources.



*Rangeland and grassland ICCA: Summering grounds of Shahsevan Tribal Confederacy*  
Courtesy: Jalal Sepehri, CENESTA

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<sup>20</sup> On average, meat production from the rangelands is about a third of the total meat production in the country (approx. 220,000 tons/year). Typically, the yearly production from rangelands is more than 20,000 tons of wool and nearly 500,000 tons of milk and other dairy products. Annual dry matter production of rangelands is estimated at over 10 million tons. In addition to forage and fuel wood, Iran's rangelands produce nearly 40 thousand tons of medicinal plants/year (valued at US \$78 million/year in 1989-1993). In 1998, income from export of 27 tons of galbanum gum (extracted from *Ferula gummosa*—a rangeland plant that grows over an area of 700,000 ha in Iran) was reported to be US\$180,000.

In the meantime with the larger conserved territories of indigenous nomadic tribes and local traditional communities, there are special conserved areas that are put into protection regimes for specific purposes. This includes:

- Setting areas under permanent protection due to their intrinsic value, such as sacred sites (tombs of holy men and women, natural events that are presumed to influence productivity of domestic or wild animals), and refuge areas for certain wild animal and plant species and varieties;
- Setting areas under temporary *qoroq* or *qorukh* (protection, prohibition) due to needs such as seasonal and periodic restoration of rangelands, forests, wetlands, wildlife and fishing grounds; special needs of certain livestock species (e.g., lactating or young livestock, endangered wildlife, draft animals) or adjustments in range management due to drought periods, migration and transhumance routes, etc.;
- Providing strong protection to certain types of ecosystems such as wetlands and habitats of migratory birds and other wildlife.

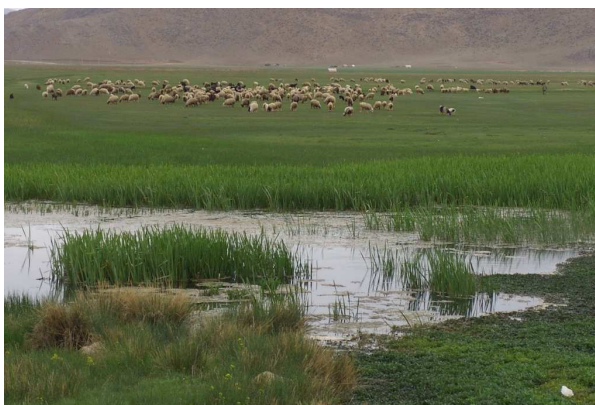
Table 2 lists a few examples of the ICCAs in Iran in various ecosystem types. See Annex 1 for more examples and detail<sup>21</sup>.

**Table 2: Types of ICCAs in Iran, with representative examples**

Type of Ecosystem	List of the ICCAs
Wetland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kushk-e Zar (Namdan Plain) Wetland;</li> <li>• Damgahs (Doumas) of Fereydun-kenar, Sorkhrud and Ezbaran</li> <li>• Sulduz (or Sirangöli) Wetland</li> <li>• Traditional Ab-Bandans in the Caspian Sea region</li> <li>• Modified Ab-Bandan in Anzali Lagoon</li> <li>• Kani Brazan, Kurdistan region</li> </ul>
Marine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional fishing (Damgostar) in southern coasts of the Caspian Sea</li> <li>• Mangrove forest reserves of the Northwest Indian Ocean including the northern coasts of the Persian Gulf</li> <li>• Qeshm Island (northern Persian Gulf)</li> <li>• Salakh ICCAs in Qeshm Island</li> <li>• White mangrove (<i>Avicennia marina</i>) lopping</li> <li>• Sacred Mugger crocodile (<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>)</li> <li>• Selective and conservative fishing</li> <li>• Ecotourism for livelihoods</li> </ul>
Desert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Khar-Touran region</li> <li>• God-Maliran Camel ICCA</li> <li>• Qazi Qanat</li> </ul>
Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sechah dehsard</li> <li>• Talesh forests</li> <li>• Galazani in Havareh Khol Village</li> </ul>
Rangeland and grassland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inverted Tulips Plain, Summering grounds of Hamouleh Tribe of Bakhtiari Tribal Confederacy</li> <li>• Moghan Plain, Anghout and Savalan</li> <li>• Lebd-e Bala</li> </ul>

<sup>21</sup> See also [http://www.iccaforum.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=85&Itemid=101](http://www.iccaforum.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=85&Itemid=101)  
Information is also based on interviews with IP and LC representatives of each ecosystem.





*Kushk-e Zar Wetland ICCA recognized by DOE in Iran since 2005, Namdan Plane, Eqlid District, Fars Province*

Courtesy: Pooya Qoddusi, CENESTA



*Mangrove forest reserves of the Bushehr Province, Assalouyeh, South West of Iran*

Courtesy: Taghi Farvar, CENESTA

## **2.2. Key ecological, cultural, socio-economic and political values of ICCAs**

Existence of woodlands, forests, rangelands, wildlife habitats, plants and animal genetic resources, mountains, hot springs, mineral waters, lakes are some of the key issues for conservation of ecological values of ICCAs in Iran. Threatened species that may still be present in the country because of ICCAs include Asiatic cheetah, onager (Asiatic wild ass), Siberian crane and other migratory birds. Similarly, many wetlands of local and international importance (including the Namdan Plain/Kush-e Zar and Anzali Lagoon) would no longer exist unless specific mobile indigenous peoples and traditional communities had not fought against their use– in all probability unsustainable and thus of limited and disputable value– for agricultural production and industrial ends (CENESTA 2011b).



*Qaradagh Forest*

Courtesy: Jalal Sepehri, CENESTA

Besides their ecological values as wetlands, forests, deserts, sea, marine and coastal areas, the Iranian ICCAs have important socio-economic, cultural and political values. In terms of economic values they are providing various sources for income generation and sustaining the livelihoods of indigenous or local communities through farming, livestock keeping, fishing, tourism, dairy produce etc. ICCAs also have close links with their production cycles, which provide their settlement with fodder and other essentials for their survival. In addition ICCAs are the very heart of indigenous and traditional knowledge and revival of cultural and social values. They are the main testimony for promoting and reviving strong social governance and management systems over IP territories and traditional communities' areas and territories as well as their natural resources.



*Camel ICCA, Semnan Province*

Courtesy: Ali Asghar [Abbas] Didari, CENESTA

In terms of political values, ICCAs are important in securing and maintaining territorial integrity, border security, cultural and linguistic diversity, traditions and revival of weakened social organisations of IPs and LCs.

### **2.3. Main threats to ICCAs**

The main threats to ICCAs in the country (CENESTA 2011b) derive from:

- The implementation of different economic, industrial and urban projects such as:
  - Shifting land use in rangelands to agriculture;
  - Mining, oil and gas extraction, construction of petrochemical plants, military bases, roads, factories, construction of industrial complexes, construction of

educational units (e.g. Azad university), ports, destructive effects of urban development, hunting, pollution (water, air, noise, light), drought, agribusiness activities; dams, drainage and tourism.

➤ Misguided national programmes in NRM, including:

- Programme for balancing stocking rates with respect to rangeland carrying capacity (e.g. Programmes that establish top down the number of animals supposedly to be grazing a given area of land, neglecting the local, traditional knowledge of the traditional caretaker communities);
- Ranching projects induced by American and Australian models (totally unsuitable to Iran's ecology, climate and social realities);
- Nationalisation of community governed lands;
- State management of NR including its system of individual grazing permits (there are notable exceptions, such as the case of Lazur, discussed elsewhere);
- A tribal education system deliberately designed to bring about the alienation of the tribes;
- Imposition of imported models of management such as 'cooperatives';
- Unsuitable and inapplicable national administrative and political divisions (provinces, districts and sub-districts) that have nothing to do with the reality of nomadic territories;
- Interference by government in seasonal migration;
- Re-allocation of land of nomads to other uses;
- Support to private sector incursions on nomadic lands;
- Re-allocation of water resources of nomadic peoples in their territories;
- Issuance of hunting permits in tribal territories to outsiders by government;
- Imposition of externally-owned and -managed eco-tourism activities;
- Ignoring indigenous knowledge;
- Non-participatory legislation on natural resources (currently a draft national abs protocol has been circulating in the council of ministers, prepared by technocrats who have no knowledge of indigenous peoples and their rights, nor of the obligations of states parties to the CBD towards these very same indigenous peoples and traditional communities (e.g., PoWPA and ABS));
- Destructive subsidies, such as subsidies for pesticides, chemical fertilisers, fossil fuel for agriculture, dams, roads, etc. Beginning in 2011 the government stopped all subsidies to commodities such as fossil fuels and agrochemicals. For now the equivalent of the subsidies, calculated per capita, are deposited directly in the account of each citizen with strong rumours that they will eventually stop. The only exception for now is a limited quantity of diesel fuel for farms;
- Large-scale import of animal products from overseas that disrupt domestic production;
- Large dams now constructed or planned throughout the country;
- Change and elimination of mobile services to nomads (veterinary, health, education);
- Fragmentation and blocking of migration routes even in the face of extremely strong laws strictly prohibiting such activities;
- Disruptive roads built without regard to the need for safe crossing by nomads and their flocks;

- Territorial fragmentation of territory-based ICCAs by reallocating pieces of the territory for other uses such as urban expansion, factories, refineries, military bases, agricultural projects, roads and dams;
  - Ignoring ICCAs and community conservation in national plans, laws and practices.
- Rapid and large-scale conversion of pasture to irrigated and/or industrial farm lands wherever it has been possible.
  - Continued sedentarisation attempts by the government despite the fact that virtually all previous schemes have failed.

It is a sign of the deeply seated desire of IPs and LCs to safeguard their system and the remarkable resilience of these peoples and communities that they have survived in the face of such threats, and they show no signs of disappearing, as mentioned before.

### 3. Governance and management of ICCAs

#### 3.1. How are ICCAs governed and managed?

Indigenous peoples and local communities of Iran (mobile pastoralists, sedentary villagers, forest dwellers, fisherfolk, etc.) have had the key role in governance and management of their own ecosystems. In the following we will concentrate on the case of mobile indigenous peoples (MIPs) who are the main focus of this study due to their size and ubiquity.

MIPs are now spread over 32 million hectares<sup>22</sup> of the country's rangelands— nearly 37 % of the total (Akbari & Yousefi-Baseri 2003) land mass, which include forest dwellers and fisherfolk in northern and southern forest belts of the country, Caspian sea and Indian Ocean marine ecosystems, and sedentary villagers in close relation with desert and wetland ecosystems. The surface of rangelands that they occupy currently is heavily reduced from up to an estimated 80% of the rangelands as recently as mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Akbari & Yousefi-Baseri 2003). It is noteworthy that even in the other parts of the rangelands, there are more often than not transhumant peoples (who keep a fixed base but migrated seasonally shorter distances to use summering or wintering pastures). A great deal of rangeland territory was lost to the indigenous nomadic tribes due to factors such as:

- A significant and deliberate loophole in the land reform laws of the early 1960s, which exempted from redistribution all land under 'mechanised dry-farming'. This caused an immediate rush to plough up as much rangeland as possible to claim exemption under 'mechanised dry-farmed land'. In reality these lands were nothing but huge well-conserved parts of nomadic territory-based ICCAs, and some sedentary peasant ICCAs;
- Invasion by powerful political and military individuals well-connected to the ex-Shah's regime who usurped untold extensions of these tribal ICCAs;
- Reallocation of large amounts of additional territories that were ancestral domain of nomadic tribes by FRWO under the false pretext of a pretended 'Law' of Nationalisation of Natural Resources;
- The so-called 'Law', once unearthed, turned out to be nothing but a decree pronounced by the ex-Shah's Council of Ministers in 1963!<sup>23,24</sup> (Mehrabi 2012);

<sup>22</sup> Originally nomadic tribes had a much larger area of rangelands, possibly around twice as much as their present expanse.

<sup>23</sup> In the Iranian legal tradition land property cannot be alienated extra-legally.

<sup>24</sup> See <http://www.frw.org.ir/GhavaninManabeTabee/pageid/61/language/fa-IR/Default.aspx#104>

- Change of land-use and reallocation of customary migratory routes of nomadic tribes despite the existence of tough pro-nomad laws ‘strictly’ prohibiting this practice;
- Highly questionable interpretation of ancient canonical practices regarding war booty extended to cover natural resources. This seems to have had a significant share in influencing the continued hanging on to this highly destructive decree.

We estimate that some 2/3 of the ancestral territories of indigenous nomadic tribes have been alienated using false legal pretext and other illegitimate (as described before). They have governed and managed their resources sustainably thanks to the diversity of their cultural practices and their indigenous knowledge of biodiversity management.

They have traditional norms and customs regarding natural resources that are based on their customary rules, experiential traditional knowledge, sense of ownership and autonomy, self-sufficient lifestyles, specific cultural, spiritual and dignity values, strong social structures and hierarchy (tribal confederacy, tribe/subtribe/clan/nomadic camp based)<sup>25</sup>, elder-based management systems, and collective governance and management systems compatible with environmental conservation.

The norms and customs of IPs and LCs in Iran have sustained various ways of life and forms of natural resource management over thousands of years. This applies particularly to the planning of migration, the sharing of benefits from natural resource management, restoration (*qoroqs*) of degraded areas/ territories, customary management of rangelands/forests, collection and dispersal of seeds, sustainable use of biodiversity (flora and fauna) and conflict resolution.

*(i) Seasonal migration as a historical adaptive strategy for sustainable range management*

Before the alienation of the rangelands and natural resources from the nomadic pastoralists, the care of a rangeland would be transferable to groups and individuals who were very much aware of the rules and principles governing the range and there was a strong sense of belonging among the nomads for their range and all its living elements. Responsibility went hand-in-hand with the privilege of use.

The tribal elders would organise expeditions to seasonal grazing grounds before actual migration would begin. Young tribal ‘scouts’ would travel to all the nooks and crannies of a region, say in the summering grounds, and would bring back information to the councils of elders (such as in the Bahmaie Tribe documented by Dr Nader Afshar-Naderi 1966). On the basis of this condition assessment, which included information on indicator plant species, precipitation and other environmental conditions, the tribal councils of elders would make quite detailed estimation of the carrying capacity of the rangelands intended for migration. This analysis would lead to a decision on the number of heads of animals and of the herders that were allowed to migrate. This decision would be considered final and strictly adhered to. The excess population would stay behind and carry out services such as looking after dry-farmed grains for the tribe. If after one or more seasons the situation improved, these “nomads on a waiting list” would be allowed to migrate again. Otherwise, they would simply have to move out of the system.

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<sup>25</sup> The social structure of nomadic pastoralists of Iran is: tribal confederacy – tribe – subtribe – clan and *oba* or *maal*. Tribal confederacy is the highest social structure of nomadic pastoralists, which is the union of several tribes. Each tribe is consisted of several subtribes (*tireh*), which in turn is formed of several clans. Clans are composed of several *oba* or *maal* which is the smallest unit of nomad’s social structure and collection of 5-10 tentholds that live, migrate and manage natural resources together. Each tribal confederacy has its own territory (land), culture, history and traditions. Every tribe that is not a member of a confederacy is an independent tribe with its own subtribes, clans and *oba* or *maal*.

In the case of the Qashqai, the tribal chiefs would insist on recorded and documented guarantees— often in the form of written contracts— that every user of the rangelands would respect the customary norms and laws of use. In the event of damage to the natural resources including rangelands, forests and others, heavy fines would be imposed for such things as fire damage or cutting of trees. Migration itself is a strategy for adaptation to the limits and resource changes within nature from season to season.

**Box 1: The rangeland territory of Lazur community, a model for resilience of ICCAs in Iran**

The renowned Lazur rangelands<sup>26</sup> are a small section of the Hableh Rood River watershed basin, located to the north of the District of Firooz Kooch in the Province of Tehran. Its renown is due to its outstanding characteristics in the common (customary) management of the indigenous and local community, as well as its positive role in the conservation of its flora and fauna biodiversity.

Livestock breeding based on seasonal migration, is the main source of livelihood for most of the rural households and tentholds of Lazur. The exploitation and livestock breeding systems in their rangelands (*yurds*) is based on a unique local system. The regulations of this system, which derive from community and customary law, hold sway both amongst the exploiters as well as the local management of the pasture units.

The grazing permit of the Lazur Rangelands has been issued by FRWO collectively in the name of the Village Councils as opposed to individual grazing permits for local people. Accordingly, each year, between mid-March and early April, people form a gathering or an association comprising of the chief of clans (*sar kheel*) or (*gateh chekeneh*) and members of the community Council. They gather in the Lazur Mosque, for the duties of this collective, which is to divide the rangelands among the summering herders or according to the local term, ‘divide the mountain’ among them.

The council would consist of two persons from each *kheel*, known to be the group heads and two persons from each flock of 500 heads of livestock. The two *kheel* members are present as observers so that the formal procedure or ritual of dividing the mountain in the presence of all the beneficiary groups is performed. It is possible that the members of each *kheel* are from various tribes in Lazur. For dividing the rangeland of each *kheel*, the name of each *yurd* (rangelands) are noted down on paper and then a draw is made, i.e., each *sar kheel* draws one lot, and in this way the pasture grouping for the current year is determined.

In fact, an annual grazing rotation system is still practiced for these *kheels* by drawing lots under the supervision of *sar kheels*. Pasture users felt duty-bound to apply their knowhow of grazing to ensure the sustainable use of rangelands as well as the flora and fauna (biodiversity) in the summering territories. The outstanding point is that all the herders are aware of the carrying capacity of the rangelands (*yurds*) vis-à-vis the allowable stocking rate. Hence, by common law, each group must synchronize its stocking rate with the carrying capacity of the rangelands. After the drawing of lots and the division of the mountain, the group chiefs (*sar kheels*) take charge of the rangelands and identify the *qoroqban* (ranger) to protect the range by limiting its use exclusively to the herds that belong there. In this manner, the regulation of rangelands and the stocking rates are managed totally by the community.

<sup>26</sup> Esfandyar, N., Interview with Community Animator of Lazur Village, unpublished, 2010.

This customary institution is ancient and well-tested through time. The key rule is the random rotational system of allocation of the nine pastures to an equal number of user clans. This system as assures an equitable distribution of any eventual gains and losses among the clans. In addition an ancient sacred practice involves the offering of fodder to wildlife during harsh winter conditions by placing fodder on top of snow in mountain areas.

Migratory nomadism was learnt some 10 to 12 thousand years ago in West Asia from the migratory herds that were the wild ancestors of livestock that migrate seasonally with today's nomads. It is therefore from nature itself that nomadic pastoralists have learned the art of migration as a strategy for conservation of nature and sustainable use of its resources. Seasonal migration is the most characteristic and suitable approach to resource use in the face of changing seasonal, local and long-term climatic and ecological factors.



*Spring Migration of Qashqai Tribal Confederacy*  
Courtesy: Samira Farahani, CENESTA

#### *(ii) Customary practices for rehabilitation of rangelands*

Customary practices (CENESTA 2011b) include collecting seeds of palatable range species and stuffing them in goat skins with holes tied under the belly of the lead goats. While being dragged, the seeds are dispersed on the landscape and are immediately ploughed under and fertilised by the flocks following behind. With the next rains the seedlings emerge and improve the rangelands. In recent years, however, seasonal migration to the summering grounds (*yaylaq*) requires government permits. Most often though, due to a lack of *otraqs* (half-way resting grounds with pastures in between wintering and summering grounds), the nomads do not follow the provisions set by these permits and end up paying whatever fine that is necessary in order to practice what is closer to their own indigenous knowledge of natural resource management and strategies for adapting to changing circumstances.

Long-standing traditions and customs of management and conservation of biodiversity through several systems include:

- *Qorukh* (in Turkish, *qoroq* in Persian)– strictly enforced land use limitation system used mostly during droughts and dry seasons and also based on rangeland capacity;
- Rangeland revival system– traditional system used for seed dispersion
- Cyclical and alternate rangeland use based on wildlife mating and birthing seasons
- *Yurd* system– customary seasonal settlement and grazing areas (both duration and stock level) at the level of Oba (Nomadic camps) based on rangeland carrying capacity assessments

- *Kham* system– managed irrigation system for pastures where water is alternately directed to specific areas based on needs
- Spiritual and belief system (certain sites are strictly forbidden based on their classification as sacred sites in nomadic beliefs)
- Customary methods for determining rangeland carrying capacity: on the micro, meso and macro levels (usually by customary institutions of range management) were by necessity largely abandoned as control over common property range was wrested by technocrats who imposed their “scientific approaches” to calculate carrying capacity and allocate grazing permits that usually had little to do with the actual capacities of the land and its dynamics of variability in precipitation, productivity and resilience. The science of indigenous peoples, based on centuries and even millennia of experience, was ignored and only now is beginning to be again valued and integrated by government officials and staff.



*Field visit / Discussion on participatory livestock breeding, Tehran, Lazur village territory*  
 Courtesy: Mehdi Hasannezhad, CENESTA

### **3.2. Key issues faced in governing and managing ICCAs**

The main issues facing the governance and management of ICCAs (CENESTA 2007) are:

- The adverse impact on natural resources and agriculture that befell from the joint policies of Agrarian Reform and Nationalisation of Natural Resources as part of the 1963 ‘White Revolution’ of the Shah. These policies were not in harmony with customary rules and norms and severely weakened customary institutions, mutual aid associations and governance systems of natural resource management, water use, and conservation of biodiversity as well as local monitoring systems of natural resource management in all types of ecosystems. Losses in customary systems, furthermore, were replaced with expensive and inefficient government bureaucratic systems;
- Continuous process of sedentarisation policy after the Islamic Republic of Iran and its legitimacy through the annual and five-year development plans;
- Development of infrastructure leading to expansion and incursion of major paved roads and highways into nomadic rangelands and migration routes thus destroying the natural habitats of various plants and animal species;
- Rapid and large-scale conversion of the natural nomadic rangeland to other uses including irrigated and/or industrial farm lands;
- Emigration of nomads from the traditional rangelands due to lack of economic, social, and policy support; and changing cultural traditions, norms, and customs;



- Inter-generational differences in perception among older and younger nomads about pastoralist lifestyle, customs, and traditions leading to a tendency among the younger generation toward urbanized living<sup>27</sup>;
- Increased move by local farmers and several tribal nomads themselves for large to moderate-scale farming and/or industrial animal production. However this has not been possible over very large parts of the territory;
- Urban sprawl into nomadic rangeland;
- Land grabbing and fragmentation of indigenous peoples territories by various development projects in particular (migratory routes) as well as summering and wintering grounds and destroying the natural habitats of various plants and animal species in those areas;
- Weakening indigenous peoples' social structure (Confederacy, tribal, etc.), which were a pillar of governance in the communities and ignoring their customary rules in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. This is threatening the sustainability and livelihood of these communities.

#### **4. Recognition and support to ICCAs**

##### **4.1. Government recognition and support to ICCAs**

Despite nationalisation of natural resources (Law of 1963) and lack of laws and policies focusing on ICCAs as such, there are many ways in which ICCAs are 'recognised' and 'supported' in Iran, partly through existing laws and partly by actions of the government, international organisations and civil society organisations.

##### *(i) Recognition and support to decentralized governance and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities*

In Iran, Local Councils are elected by the relevant constituencies at village and/or tribal, sub-district, district and provincial levels. Such Councils, however do not have financial backing for their deliberations (an important exception are the urban areas, where income can be raised through taxes). All development and natural resource management decisions and all decisions on budgetary matters are thus taken by the Heads of government institutions and agencies at the provincial level, who are appointed by the central authorities in the capital.

However, despite or possibly even because of the lack of strong elected local powers, customary institutions do exist and continue to play roles in continuity with tradition. Iran, in fact, is a country with millenary tradition of community management of natural resources, in particular in the migration territories of mobile indigenous peoples (over 700 tribes). Such migration territories can be truly large, encompassing wintering grounds (often dry lands and semi-dry lands) at lower elevation and summering grounds in the mountains (often lush pastures), but also long migration corridors in between, where water and unencumbered mobility are essential. Customary institutions have been in charge of these migration territories, whose conservation is essential for the livelihoods of the herds as it is for the livelihoods and culture of the people who depend on the herds for survival. Unfortunately, such migration territories are increasingly disturbed and at times outright blocked by modern

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<sup>27</sup> Unlike in the past, however, much of the youth that leaves now has no intention to come back, nor would have the capacities to take up again nomadic lifestyles.

types of development– from major infrastructures to agricultural projects (often quite ecologically unsuited), from military uses to protected areas.

The following legislation is relevant to re-affirm the customary institutions and rights of local communities and mobile indigenous peoples in Iran:

- Article 44 of the Constitution of the Republic, referring to the respective roles of government, the cooperative sector and the private sector in the economy, which is being interpreted by many indigenous peoples and local communities as requiring the handover of collective governance rights to their territories to nomadic tribes and other local communities; it was also interpreted as such by the government on at least one important occasion (announcement by Deputy Director of FRWO to a meeting of nomadic pastoralists, government agencies and civil society organisations in August 2010)<sup>28</sup>;
- Article 2 of the 1980 Law on Conservation and Use of Forests and Rangelands, which establishes that the reallocation or change of use of ‘public lands’ in the following categories from their original designation is ‘absolutely forbidden’:
  - a) Natural forests and woods;
  - b) Common property rangelands of villages (needed for animal husbandry);
  - c) Public tree nurseries (for forestry);
  - d) Forest parks and common property forests (including replanted ones); and
  - e) Customary migration routes and territories of nomadic tribes reserved for them.

This law clearly confirms the ***absolute inviolability*** of migratory territories (core of territorial rights of IPs in Iran) and strictly forbids any change of use of their purpose.



*Spring Migration of Shahsevan Tribal Confederacy*  
Courtesy: Taghi Farvar, CENESTA

Broadly following the legislation mentioned above, the Forest, Range and Watershed Management Organisation (FRWO) has sometimes used its legal power to grant collective grazing rights over the customary territories of nomadic peoples and traditional communities.

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<sup>28</sup> This article can be an opportunity as well as a threat for the rights of IPs and LCs as it can be interpreted to reducing the role of government in governing natural resources through processes of privatization. Enlightened government officials believe that the article could allow, however, the fusing of indigenous knowledge with the latest scientific findings in the field of range ecology in the territories of nomadic tribes, which would be governed/ managed by the tribes through their registered and formally recognised CBOs, with the support of both government and CSOs. Steps are being taken in this direction, including the 2011 Law approving the 5<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Development Plan.

An example in point is the case of Lazor community (see Section 3.1), that for some decade has been granted collective grazing rights over its long-range (nearly 1000 Km) customary migration territory and, in particular, over its lush summering grounds.

In addition, the 2011 Law of the Fifth Five Year Development Plan<sup>29</sup> approves the proposal for developing a model of ecosystem management with territory-based rangeland governance by nomadic tribes with financial support by government in the context of pilot projects<sup>30</sup>. This followed the specific admission that their prior sedentarised (ranching) management policies had failed and the government needed to go back to support transhumance practices. In 2012, IPs and LCs representatives had an opportunity to review and comment upon the draft of a new integrated natural resource law. The comments– in support of community conservation and sustainable use of NRs– were sent to the Parliamentary Committee in charge, with copies to the Supreme Leader, the President and the Minister of Agriculture.

*(ii) Legal and policy support to recognition of ICCAs*

As mentioned, specific legislation and policies ‘on ICCAs’ do not yet exist but a legal case can be made that the migration territories of nomadic IPs (core of their ICCAs) are actually already recognised on the basis of the legislation described above. There are, in fact, examples of relevant Heads at provincial level that recognise ICCAs *de facto* by issuing grazing permit or supporting ICCA-like claims in court cases on access to land. Such recognitions can be overturned by central authorities, but they can also be confirmed. In a landmark administrative decree, the Department of the Environment (DOE) thus confirmed in 2005 the recognition (initially made at provincial level) of the Namdan Plain Wetland as ICCA of the Shish Bayli Tribe of the Qashqai nomadic people (see Annex 2).

Another relevant case is the one of the self-declared revived ICCA of Farrokhvand tribe of Bakhtiari nomadic tribal confederacy. This ICCA is not only valuable for grazing, but also for the economic value of some of the wild plants that can be found there abundantly (e.g. wild celery, inverted tulips, etc.). As those plants were being extracted by outsiders to the communities in violation of the customary rules, the Farrokhvand tribe decided to set up community guards to maintain the respect of such rules. Very important plant regeneration has already taken place and more is expected in the next future so that income for the Farrokhvand community *sandug* is soon expected to reach hundreds of thousands of US\$ per year. The NGO CENESTA facilitated a few years ago the recognition by FRWO of the rights of the tribe to their territories, also on the basis of their proven capacity to govern it and manage it sustainably. A GEF-SGP initiative strongly contributed to this. As a result, the territory of the Farrokhvand tribe is now recognised under their governance and the government openly supports the community guards to enforce the local rules, including by the issuing of official badges.

The *de facto* government acceptance of ICCAs in GEF-SGP projects is widespread. We say *de facto* acceptance as the Government sits in the GEF-SGP National Committee that

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<sup>29</sup> Note that such major development plans acquire legal status in Iran.

<sup>30</sup> Article 187 of 5<sup>th</sup> five year development plan of the country gives “*permission to government for the protection, rehabilitation and sustainable use of the environment, natural resources and biodiversity [instructing them] before the end of the second year of the plan to take legal action for [among others] preparing and implementing territory-based Integrated Management Plans for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity in fragile and sensitive ecosystems of the country*” (with reference being to nomadic pastoral areas).

supervises and approves GEF-SGP projects<sup>31</sup>. Projects involve the technical and economic support (in cash and in-kind) to ICCA-related activities and initiatives with focus on conservation of biodiversity, social mobilisation, climate change and drought mitigation and adaptation, documentation of traditional knowledge, improvement of the sustainable livelihood of IPs and LCs and outright advocacy and promotion of ICCAs. Examples of such projects are listed in table 3 below.

**Table 3: UNDP-GEF-SGP projects involving *de facto* government recognition of ICCAs**

Brief project description	Name of NGO/ CBO that runs the project
Conservation of Namdan Plain (Kushke-Zar Wetland), in the summering ground of Qashqai tribal confederacy (first pilot project focusing on ICCA in Iran, recognition of the first ICCA in Iran through the issue of an official letter from DOE (see Annex 2. for the translated copy of the letter)	Cenesta
Participatory conservation of Kani-Brazan Wetland and its Biodiversity through Empowering Local Communities of Qara Dagh and Khor-Khoreh Villages, West Azerbaijan region, Mahabad District	Mohitban (Game guards) NGO for Research and Conservation of Sustainable Nature
Support of Community Forest CCA, (Galazani), Kurdistan	Youth Association for Earth Conservation (Damoon)
Support and conservation of endangered marine turtle population of Qeshm Island	Voice of Sustainable Nature Institute and Department of Environment of Qeshm Island
Damgahs (Douma) of Fereydunkenar, Sorkhrud and Ezbaran, Siberian Crane	Siberian Crane (Durna) Conservation Society (NGO)
Traditional fishing grounds, (Damgostar) in southern coasts of the Caspian Sea, Fereydunkenar	Voice of Sustainable Nature Institute
Abolhasani nomadic tribal territory (ICCA) management– effects of climate change and dealing with the drought through local initiatives in defining a life cycle for pasture and crop management– Kharturan Region, Central Desert of Iran	Council of Elders, Abolhasani Tribal Confederacy
Sustainable management of natural resources and livelihood improvement– Chodari nomadic pastoralist tribe– through adaptation to climate change and drought mitigation Kharturan Region, Central Desert of Iran	Council of Elders, Chodari Tribe
Restoring traditional Inverted Tulip ICCA in the midpoint resting grounds of the Bakhtiari Tribal Confederation: Farrokhvand Tribe	Council of Elders, Bakhtiari Tribal Confederacy
Planning and implementation of ICCA-based Ecotourism by the Heybətli clan of the Kuhi sub-tribe of Shish Bəyli Tribe of the Qashqai Confederacy	Council of Elders, of Heybətli sub-tribe

<sup>31</sup> The committee includes representatives of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Energy, Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Organisation, the Faculty of Natural Resources of Isfahan University, the Sabzyaran-eh Dena Association and the Cultural Heritage, Ecotourism and Handycrafts Organisation.



*Field visit: UN Resident Coordinator– Iran, UNDP/GEF/SGP National Coordinator, CENESTA staff, and Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy*  
Courtesy: Ali Asghar [Abbas] Didari, CENESTA



*Rangeland and Grassland ICCA: Inverted Tulips Plain, Summering Grounds of Hamouleh Tribe of Bakhtiari Tribal Confederacy*  
Courtesy: Nahid Naghizadeh, CENESTA

Regarding the *de jure* government recognition of ICCAs, the situation is still very fluid. We can mention, however, that a draft joint agreement has been developed among the Habitats and Protected Areas office of DOE, FRWO, some IP organisations and CENESTA, with the encouragement of GEF-SGP, for the recognition of nomadic pastoralists territories as a new governance type of protected areas (ICCAs) in the country. In a joint meeting in UNDP/SGP office(03/07/2011) with participation of at least 10 representatives of nomadic pastoralist organisations, the national coordinator of GEF-SGP project and the ICCA Consortium president, the DG of Habitats and Protected Areas of DOE thus stated: “*DOE is responsible for adding 200,000 hectares to the country’s protected areas before 2020. We should use lessons learned from the pilot projects in support of ICCAs in Iran and see how they can facilitate the process for more support and recognition of the ICCAs by approving suitable policies and laws in this regard. Aichi Target 11 of CBD legitimises the inclusion of ICCAs as an effective governance type to conserve at least 17% of land area and 10% of marine and coastal areas of the world. We need to do a lot of work on this issue and see what can be done about the further recognition of ICCAs as a governance type of protected areas in Iran. We should use for this the related lessons learnt worldwide*”. In May 2012, the DG of Habitats

and Protected Areas of DOE re-affirmed that perspective and agreed to pursue consultations about appropriate recognition and support to ICCAs towards Aichi target 11<sup>32</sup>.

Non-legal policy recognition of ICCAs includes action plans, in particular the action plan prepared jointly by CSO / IPs / FRWO / DOE at the Birjand Multi-Stakeholder meeting of 2007, which had a focus on problem identification, future visioning, and the development of an action plan for all biomes in the country<sup>33</sup>. This eventually led to territory-based ICCAs included in the Law of the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan.

Declarations, commitments and some concrete action by top administrators of FRWO can also be mentioned in support of nomadic and local community ICCAs, one example being the impending restitution of the governance of seasonal migration back to tribal elders in Fars Province<sup>34</sup>. Another example is the recognition of the boundaries of ancestral territory of Abolhassani indigenous nomadic tribe in Touran UNESCO Biosphere.

In general, government pronouncements in support of ICCAs are actively encouraged by civil society organisations and IP organisations in platforms, congresses and seminars (e.g. World Day to Combat Desertification, National Day of Natural Resources, etc.). These events provide excellent situations for discussion among key right-holders and stakeholders at local and national levels and have been amply sought after by civil society organisations in Iran. For instance, four workshops on Community Biodiversity Registers (CBRs) and Community Bio-Cultural Diversity Protocols (CBPs) took place in different field locations and urban areas in preparation for COP10 of CBD and the Nagoya Protocol. Two multi-stakeholder forums also took place on indigenous knowledge, community conservation, customary management and modern range science as part of the Territory-Based Sustainable Range Management Programme (TBSRM). It was on this occasion that the Deputy Director of FRWO for Arid and Semi-arid Regions said: *“The participation of representatives of various stakeholder groups in this forum is a great opportunity to develop fundamental solutions to protect pastures and natural resources [in our country]. I welcome in particular the presence of representatives of the indigenous nomadic tribal communities that have an historical, profound relationship with the conservation of nature and have used natural resources sustainably. Rural and tribal organizations should be strengthened in terms of capacity to the extent that FRWO would be able to delegate tasks to the communities in conformity with their customary conservation and sustainable use practices so that their community conserved areas and territories can be restored and recognised. They must be supported— technically and financially -- to regain their role in governance of natural resources and community conserved areas. ...Aware that tribal communities are the social group with the most care for the rangelands, we must find ways to both restore the land to their stewardship, and improve their livelihoods. This requires an answer to the question, how do we devolve governance to the people? According to what process and procedure? This is what we need to find out to transcend the current situation and see the betterment of our rangelands.”*

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<sup>32</sup> Mogaddasi, Naser. 8 June 2012. Personal communication.

<sup>33</sup> See Annex 3 for the final declaration of multi-stakeholder workshop on ICCAs in Iran.

<sup>34</sup> In recent years the government has created an interagency committee to supervise the process of seasonal migration including imposing dates for when to arrive and leave summering and wintering grounds, citing the need for protecting rangelands and assuring the security of migration. The process of empowerment of the tribes has resulted in the latter negotiating with the government for the restitution of this function back to the council of elders of the tribes. A pilot experience is expected to start in the Province of Fars.



*Field training Course on Community Biodiversity Registers (CBRs) and Community Bio-Cultural Diversity Protocols (CBPs), Lazur Village*  
 Courtesy: Mehdi Hassannezhad, CENESTA



*Workshops on Community Biodiversity Registers (CBRs) and Community Bio-Cultural Diversity Protocols (CBPs), Fars Province, Abadeh, Shibidzar (Summering Grounds of Qashqai Tribal Confederacy)*  
 Courtesy: Mehdi Hasannezhad, CENESTA

In terms of economic support, the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan foresees delivering some services on a provisional basis to nomadic communities managing their territories. For example:

- As a result of external pressures and induced sedentarisation attempts many nomadic communities have had to resort to cutting fuel wood closer to home base. As a temporary measure to allow longer term support to improve environmental and economic factors, the above-mentioned Plan will provide energy resources to reduce pressure on trees and bushes in temporary points of settlement;
- Given the increased scale and frequency of droughts, the Plan will provide supplementary water at times of drought;
- Likewise the provision of short-term fodder requirements for nomadic communities— also foreseen in the Plan— will alleviate grazing pressure on rangelands during droughts.

Besides SGP funding to individual ICCAs through their community investment funds (*sandugs*), contributions to individual ICCAs are also made by national-level GEF projects (e.g., the Siberian Crane Project and the Asiatic Cheetah Project), and by projects supported by IIED, EU, UNDP-DDC, Siemenpuu Foundation, etc.

## 4.2. Civil Society recognition and support to ICCAs

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples (IP) and Local Community (LC) organisations in Iran have collaborated for a variety of initiatives to advocate for the recognition and support of ICCAs at times with the help of specific projects (mostly UNDP-GEF-SGP projects, some listed in table 3, section 4.1) that allowed debates, meetings, documentation, awareness raising, networking, interaction and alliance building among relevant ICCA communities, interested government experts and authorities, and even airing of existing problems and issues through the media.

Communication activities, in particular, saw the development of a number of ‘ICCA stories’ that appeared on public TV, national and provincial newspapers, and rural radio programmes, and culminated into a full length feature on nomadic ICCAs prepared for the National Television. Participatory video, ‘PhotoStory’ pieces and ‘PhotoVoice’ annotated albums were useful early steps to that. Alongside, more technical contributions were also prepared, including short and long versions of an ICCA Briefing Note in Persian and a number of specific studies and case examples at local, national and regional level. Capacity building activities also took place, involving CSOs, universities and even government staff in offering local communities new skills (e.g. GPS and PGIS) for delineation of their territories, skills in participatory video, financial management of projects, marketing of sustainably used resources and botanical techniques for community biodiversity registers and protocols, in particular for the registration of endemic species, varieties, races and genetic material. Taken together, these initiatives played an indisputable role in moving forward the ICCA agenda and establishing it as a concept and possibly even a priority in the minds and agendas of authorities. At times, they have even succeeded in mobilising support from international bodies in a relatively short period of time.

After a decade of this type of interventions for ‘basic awareness and support’ focusing mostly on individual ICCAs, a new type of interventions is now aiming– directly and strategically– at influencing broad policies, programmes and practices. A key example is offered by on-going initiatives to strengthen the social organisation of IPs and LCs through their customary institutions and structures but in the form of registered CBO organisations (see Box 1). Another is the participatory review of the ‘Comprehensive Law of Natural Resources of Iran’, raising new approaches and ideas in sustainable range management in nomadic pastoralist territories<sup>35</sup>, which is still on-going. Another is the organising of specific and topical workshops to raise the profile of indigenous knowledge, community conservation, customary management vis-à-vis modern range science, including with a focus on community biodiversity registers and protocols (CBRs and CBPs)<sup>36</sup> and community governance of seasonal migration routes. In these events, face-to-face discussions, debate and negotiations among government authorities, policy makers and IPs and LCs have provided an opportunity for direct presentation of real stories, reaffirming the communities’ sense of ownership and belonging to their lands. As a matter of fact, in recent workshops IPs and LCs have been free to state their rights in ICCA related issues and to criticize existing legislation at local and national levels. Government staff, on their part, has had a chance to perceive the unique

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<sup>35</sup> See Annex 4, Summary of ‘Territory-Based Sustainable Range Management Programme’.

<sup>36</sup> The nomadic tribes have been collecting their plant biodiversity specimens four times a year along their entire territory, including in the summering grounds, wintering grounds as well as over the spring and autumn migration routes.



customary institutions and rules and the general capabilities and understanding of IPs and LCs for the governance and management of their territories.

As part of this new and bolder strategic approach, a proposition was also made by IPs and LCs in relation to implementation of Article 44 (see section 4.1) of the Constitution, namely that the article should be taken seriously in reference to the collective ownership of the traditional territories of IPs and LCs. This proposition is included in a number of declarations<sup>37</sup>, which specifically asked that the responsibility for the governance and management of natural resources– including preservation, sustainable use and rehabilitation of migration territories– be transferred to the IPs and LCs and their tribal and community organisations, including women and their organisations. The declarations were facilitated by the convening support provided by civil society organisations, which promoted exchanges and mutual learning at local, national, regional and global gatherings and provided secretariat and communication facilities, technical advice, etc. towards the creation of networks, Federations, Unions and the like.



**Map 4: Territories of tribes engaged in reviving their customary institutions**  
See text box below (Source: Yashar Hasannezhad, CENESTA)

<sup>37</sup> These include: Declaration of the First National ICCA Workshop, UNDP-GEF-SGP, Tehran, 9 July 2008; Joint Declaration of UNINOMAD and UNICAMEL on self-governance of indigenous territories, CENESTA, Tehran, 5 April 2012; Declaration of Indigenous Camel Herders on the occasion of the First National Camel Congress, Meshed, 17 April 2012; Declaration on Wetland ICCAs, Anzali Lagoon Workshop, Anzali, Iran; Declaration on Droughts and ICCAs, Shiraz, August 2008; Declaration of Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on the Future of Arid Lands, Birjand, October 2007; Declaration on Territory-Based Natural Resource Management, on the occasion of the Fourth National Congress of Rangelands, Brujerd, May 2012.

## **Box 2: Strengthening the social organisation and local economy of IPs and LCs**

In the past decade, the Iranian NGO CENESTA has collaborated with IPs and LCs to undertake large-scale efforts to strengthen the social organisation of nomadic pastoralists (e.g. their Councils of Elders) and their economic mechanism (e.g., via community *sanduqs*, that are *Community Funds for Sustainable Livelihoods and Community Investment*). The customary organisations have been offered social recognition and visibility by assisting them to officially register as CBOs. This led to a relatively large number of registered IPs and LCs organisations, representing units as small as a local nomadic camp up and units as large as the Union of Indigenous Camel Herders of Iran. In some cases, these organisations have even acquired membership in relevant international organisations. The strengthening process moves from Participatory Action Research processes (identification of problems, opportunities, priorities for action) to the needed steps to recast their strong traditional social organisation in modern “legally acceptable” forms. In general the IP and LC organisations are very clear on their intention to announce their formal existence and unite their voices at national level. The numerous pronouncements and declarations issued by them so far testifies to their intention to govern and manage their customary territories to create sustainable livelihoods along with the conservation of nature, as they have always done.

The impact of IP and LC declarations such as the ones mentioned above is obviously amplified by the fact that— on the ground— IPs and LCs demonstrate to be capable and effective in strategic and operational planning, management and good governance of their natural resources. This is due to their own great will and efforts, often against powerful odds and obstacles, and even needing to counteract misguided policies that remain in place despite their obvious failure. With the support of CSOs and GEF-SGP, good progress has also been achieved in community mechanisms for conflict resolution. As a result, the social legitimacy of IP and LC organisations has been increasing, nourished by their endogenous effort for solidarity, the mutual coherence of their territories, and their increased ability to negotiate with relevant government authorities.

In the meantime, the evolving international events and policies (where Iran also participated through IPs and LC representatives and government authorities and experts) helped convince the government that ICCA are a serious issue, that they are here to stay, and that taking them into account can have important positive consequences for conservation in the country. WAMIP, CENESTA and the ICCA Consortium, have helped to document and illustrate the diversity of Iranian ICCAs in nomadic and sedentary communities (video, power point presentations, photo-stories, etc.) in many international events. And the ICCA-related declarations, pronouncements and resolutions from international events have had positive effects for the recognition and support of ICCAs in Iran.

Taken together, the efforts of civil society have been paving a path toward a better understanding of ICCAs at all levels and facilitated what can only be described as a major change of attitudes and behaviour in ICCA-related issues on the part of government and other key stakeholders in the country, such as the staff of international organisations and donors.

### 4.3. Key issues for the recognition and support to ICCAs

We have seen that indigenous peoples and local communities affirm their will to restore the customary governance and management of their territories and demand the official recognition and support for ICCAs. They stress that this will be for the good of a variety of complementary objectives, including their own livelihoods and cultural diversity as well as the conservation of diversity of flora and fauna in their territories. In parallel, government authorities have come to the conclusion that their own expert-led, top down governance and management systems on all types of Iranian biomes have not proven sustainable. As a matter of fact their policies have in place even hastened the loss of forests and rangelands and their precious biodiversity. What were the shortcomings of such policies? And what are the current burning questions and issues that must be addressed? Numerous workshops, meetings, debates on ICCAs with IPs, LCs, CSOs and relevant government authorities have identified the following:

- Government inertia, or the tendency of government authorities to keep implementing failed policies and programmes such as the nationalisation of rangelands and the so-called land reform in the country;
- Repeated errors and imposed draconian measures in the guise of science and technology diktats in NRM;
- Disregard by policy makers and decision makers of the obligations of Iran vis-à-vis international conventions and agreements (e.g., UNCCD, ILO Convention 169, UNDRIP, CBD, including POWPA, etc.);
- Implementation of badly designed and implemented projects by government– ostensibly to conserve forests, deserts, rangelands and other ecosystems, including national projects to establish the ‘balance’ between livestock and rangelands (several such projects have included the forced or induced removal of forest dwellers, the forced or induced sedentarisation of nomadic pastoralists, the setting in place of highly inappropriate ‘ranching’ projects in tribal zones that are only suited for seasonal grazing, etc.);
- Inadequate attention to Iranian cultural heritage of indigenous and traditional knowledge of natural resource about water, soil, wildlife, wetland, forest, rangeland, mountains, desert and marine ecosystems;
- Lack of attention to the social, cultural, spiritual, economic, ecological and political losses befallen on IPs and LCs as a result of modernization and the rush towards urban living, which caused the marginalisation and weakening of traditional life styles and the loss of the socio-economic security of traditional communities overall;
- Neglect to the value of sustaining IPs and LCs livelihoods through appropriate income- and wealth-generation activities, and promotion of policies that instead encourage them to leave their ancestral lands prey to huge and harmful development projects;
- Lack of transparency and citizen oversight leading to corruption among both government officials and private sector consulting and contracting firms;
- Lack of coordination between government organisations and top-down and unaccountable planning and decision making behind closed doors;
- Weakened sense of ownership and sense of responsibility in IPs and LCs towards conserving their territories as a result of the historical failures of government interference and experiments in this regard;
- Government-promoted ‘civil society organisations’ that privileged imported non-transparent organisational models, such as ‘cooperatives’ that highlight individual benefits only and neglect the common, collective good of communities;

- High risk of ecological loss (flora and fauna) even in ICCAs because of land grabbing, changing land use patterns, big dam constructions, natural disasters and climate change: basically all ecosystems in the country have already been affected by inappropriate and destructive policies and plans;
- Changing aspirations of younger generations and their tendency to urban life style due to lack of services and economic opportunities in IP and LC territories;
- Weakened social organisation within IPs and LCs;
- Poor communication between policy and decision makers and natural resource users in the country and unmet needs for conflict resolution on land tenure, in particular in nationalised territories;
- Lack of funding earmarked to sustain conservation by indigenous peoples and local communities.

Overall, there is now, more than ever, an urgent need for reform in the governance and management of natural resources in the country– a new departure from the ill-fated prior reform of 1963.

## 5. The Future

### 5.1. Future activities planned by the communities, the government, and the civil society; especially in relation to issues of recognition and support

What is expected to be the fate of Iranian ICCAs in the foreseeable future? At least three main positive developments are expected from the government and civil society, as follows:

#### Government initiatives for ICCA Recognition

The Department of the Environment (DOE) has decided to start a process for ‘appropriate recognition’ of ICCAs with a view to meet CBD Aichi Target 11, and it may report on this by the time of CBD COP11 (India, October 2012), or at COP12 and WPC6. DOE has started a consultation process, which has begun with CENESTA and ICCA Consortium representatives in the country. The work of the Consortium and other organisations like IUCN WCPA/CEESP TILCEPA, including the Briefing Notes and the booklet on ICCAs produced for COP10 is currently been used as reference material.



*Field visit to select pilot areas for Territory-Based Sustainable Range Management Programme*  
 Courtesy: Ali Asghar [Abbas] Didari, CENESTA

## Indigenous Peoples' initiatives for ICCA Recognition

Indigenous peoples will pursue their push to have the government support their proposals for Territory-based Sustainable Range Management Programme (TBSRM), which is the closest the government has come to recognition of the ICCAs of IPs. LC organisations will keep offering their advice in policy making processes at various levels, for instance in drafting a policy paper for the 5<sup>th</sup> five-year development plan and in other forms of community-based natural resource management. TBSRM is now approved by FRWO and funds have been allocated for a number of pilot schemes. This project was effectively designed by the tribal councils of several tribes to empower them to reclaim their rights over their territorial ICCAs (forests, rangelands, wetlands, marine and coastal areas), which would then be conserved and used sustainably in accordance with customary science and management.

### **Box 3: A Six-Step Community-Driven Process for ICCA Recognition**

#### ***Indigenous people take matters into their own hand***

Given this lack of fully effective system of 'formal recognition' of ICCAs in the country, the indigenous nomadic tribes of Iran have decided to remedy the situation on their own, while pushing other actors, notably government agencies, to move ahead where possible. This will help save the customary ICCAs thanks to the admirable resilience and resistance of the indigenous nomadic tribes (INTs) themselves. Faced with this earnest follow-up by the nomadic tribes and their own realisation of a need for change, the FRWO has announced a change in its policies in a recent gathering of nomadic tribes that henceforth the government will leave these matters of governance and management of the tribal territories and rangelands to the tribal structures themselves and will content itself mostly to a supporting role.<sup>38</sup>

The following chart shows the 6-stages of the community-driven process for formalising the recognition of ICCAs – to begin with a declaration by the INTs themselves. The process starts with an assessment by the community concerned of the key elements of their ICCAs and their issuing of a Community ICCA Declaration (CID). All subsequent phases are based on this community driven act. While most recognition procedures around the world seem to get bogged down by waiting for the State to recognise ICCAs, the INTs of Iran have come up with a procedure that relies on their own strengths while pulling in the other actors where needed. The problem with taking the state route is that ICCAs are a part of the customary institutions and culture of indigenous peoples who need to be given the freedom to govern and manage on their own – while most governments have a tendency to interfere with the governance systems of indigenous peoples and local communities. It has taken Iranian nomads a decade of hard work, struggle, and exposure to national and international events to acquire the feeling of self-reliance and the courage of their convictions to decide to do it on their own while influencing public policy and practice. This approach needs to proceed and succeed. If it does – and it has a very good chance of doing so – then Iranian nomadic tribes will have a number of useful lessons to share with their sister tribes and communities elsewhere around the world.

The six stages of recognition adopted by INTs are as follows:

<sup>38</sup> Chief Farrokhvand, Vice-President of the Bakhtiari Tribal Confederacy, personal communication, 23 September 2012 relating the announcement by the Director-General of Rangelands on 16 September 2012 in ShahriKurd, Charmahal-Bakhtiari.

## **I. Preparatory Phase**

1. Participatory Action Research to elaborate the current predicament, desired future, road map (strategy) and action plan for the ICCA concerned. This will give the community concerned the opportunity to decide the future of their ICCAs;
2. A community assessment of the integrity of the ICCA from three basic viewpoints:
  - Ecological integrity;
  - Territorial integrity, and
  - Governance integrityof the ICCA concerned;
3. An FPIC workshop to decide if the community concerned wishes to go forward;<sup>39</sup>

## **II. Recognition Phase**

1. A Community ICCA Declaration (CID) on each ICCA concerned. The three Community Assessments will form Annexes 1-3 to this Declaration: this package, called the Recognition Documents, will be transmitted to UNINOMAD;
2. The Recognition Documents will be used by UNINOMAD for entering the ICCA concerned into UNINOMAD's National Registry of ICCAs of nomadic tribes. Other types of ICCAs will be given the choice of being entered into this same Registry or form one of their own<sup>40</sup>; once this step is done news of it will be posted on UNINOMAD's website for public information;
3. UNINOMAD will transmit the Recognition Documentation to the National ICCA Multi-Stakeholder Support Platform (NIMSSP)<sup>41</sup>;
4. UNINOMAD transmits the Recognition Documentation further to the ICCA Consortium, of which it is a member, for recording in the latter's website;
5. Simultaneously, UNINOMAD transmits the same documentation to UNEP's World Registry of Protected Areas maintained by WCMC<sup>42</sup>;
6. UNINOMAD also transmits the same Recognition Documentation to the Department of the Environment's Directorate General of Protected Areas for inclusion in Aichi Target 11<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Once the community assessment of the three components (ecological, territorial and governance integrity) have been carried out, an FPIC (Free Prior and Informed Consent) workshop will be held discreetly in which the community and its Council of Elders will decide if they wish to have any further action taken on their ICCAs, including whether the community assessment reports should be further prepared and/or published. The reason for this step is that some ICCAs are by their nature culturally, socially and sometimes economically sensitive

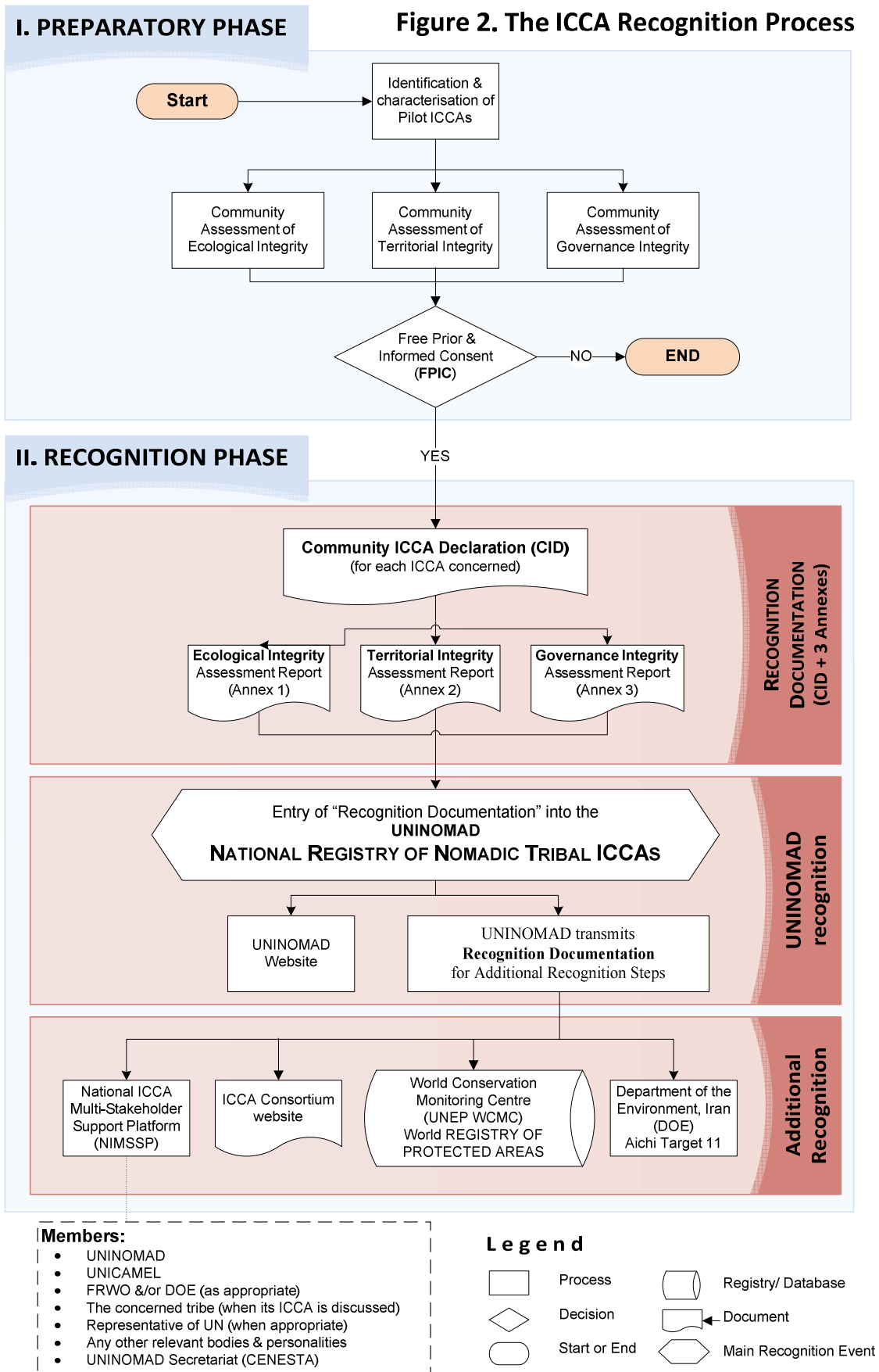
<sup>40</sup> After the Community ICCA Declaration, the registration by UNINOMAD is in fact the main stage formalising the Recognition process, and forms the base of any further steps. The National Registry will be maintained by the Secretariat of UNINOMAD, which, by the latter's statutes

<sup>41</sup> This multi-stakeholder Platform includes representatives of indigenous tribes and local traditional communities, civil society, academia and relevant government agencies. Its role includes support and promotion of community conservation in general and ICCAs in particular.

<sup>42</sup> The World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC of the United Nations Environment Programme) operates a special section of the World Registry dedicated to ICCAs.

<sup>43</sup> Aichi Target 11 of the Convention for Biological Diversity allows signatory states of CBD to claim other forms of area-based conservation, including ICCAs in the Target to cover 17% of land-based protected areas and 10% of marine and coastal protected areas by 2020.

**Figure 2: The ICCA Recognition Process**



## CSO initiatives for ICCA Recognition

CSOs, with the support of IPs and LCs will work strategically to increase the number of organisations at local (tribal councils and *sandugs*) and national levels (Federations and Unions) that can demonstrate a capacity to be in charge of governance and management of their ancestral territories. In particular, it is hoped that more coalitions and federations of IP and LC organisations join the Union of Indigenous Camel Herders of Iran and the Union of Indigenous Nomadic Tribes of Iran in the summer of 2012, on time to develop a joint statement and send a representative to develop that statement to CBD COP 11.

On the basis of exercises carried out in meetings and workshops that looked into the peoples' desired future, the following objectives will be pursued:

- Improving the relationship between Indigenous and local communities and government authorities at local and national levels in terms of governance and management of natural resources in various biomes;
- Advocating customary rights of Nomadic pastoralists and their specific social structure (Tribal Confederacies, Tribes and Sub-tribes) in NRM and in the conservation of their territories as ICCAs;
- Seeking change in the attitudes of some government authorities and bringing about the recognition of ICCAs with adequate support (legislation, policy and financial aspects) in different ecosystems and biomes;
- Carrying out various activities / projects by nomadic pastoralists in their territories (reviving and conserving endangered species within the rangelands and lobbying and encouraging government authorities to support ICCAs as per government commitments at national and international levels);
- Developing a system for registering Community Biodiversity Registers (CBRs) for wild and domestic flora and fauna and developing Community Biodiversity Protocols (CBPs) in view of the CBD Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing; this will include steps to protect indigenous/traditional knowledge against biopiracy;
- Laying the groundwork for a shift in rangeland management approaches as noted in the Territory-Based Sustainable Range Management Programme through the integration of the latest scientific evidence with traditional knowledge and scientific systems, including support for implementing pilot projects to demonstrate the approaches.
- Preparing to have nomadic pastoralist's representatives in the national parliament based on their population and geographical distribution in the country;
- Working on a reform on rules and regulations and preparing a national protocol for participatory management of rangelands, forests, wetlands and coastal areas;
- Integrating indigenous and modern knowledge and science in sustainable use and conservation of various ecosystems as well as conducting income generation activities;
- Enhancing the capacities of decision-makers and policy makers, government authorities, CSOs and community members through social communication (including audio-visuals) and dissemination of relevant lessons learnt on ICCAs elsewhere in the world;
- Carrying out more visioning and participatory planning exercises with IPs and LCs with more focus on agro-ecological activities;
- Empowering IPs and LCs and their customary institutions to stand up as legally recognised actors, capable of defending their rights and influencing policy through renewed self-awareness, internal cohesion, engagement, and effective dialogue and collaboration with governmental agencies.



## 5.2. Recommendations


On the basis of the broad review and situation analysis sketched so far, the following recommendations can be identified to provide appropriate recognition and support to ICCAs:

- ✓ The customary rights of indigenous peoples and local communities to their ancestral territories, and their knowledge, skills, institutions and rules for their governance and management should be recognised and upheld as per the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and CBD PoWPA;
- ✓ ICCAs should be officially recognized in the context of the customary laws governing them, and their governing institutions should be included in decision-making over natural resources as key right-holders;
- ✓ The sense of connection between IPs and LCs and their ICCAs should be enhanced by better regulatory frameworks, primarily through restoration of rights and security of tenure for the communities that have conserved, sustainably used and restored their ICCAs;
- ✓ Strong support should be provided to sustain the collective rights of IPs and LCs and enhance the sense of community ownership of ICCAs (e.g. via ICCA-based pilot project at all levels);
- ✓ The role of ICCAs as contributors to local livelihoods and the national economy should be recognised and enhanced;
- ✓ ICCA communities should be supported to sustain their livelihoods through pastoral activities and agriculture and gain additional income (e.g. through community owned ecotourism, medicinal plants, handicrafts, etc.) including via their Councils of elders of nomadic tribes and their *sandugs*;
- ✓ Indigenous knowledge should be better researched, recognised and applied (respecting intellectual property rights of ICCAs and their collective governance);
- ✓ Linkages should be nurtured between national and local institutions of Ps and LCs and regional and international institutions based on common global objectives of ICCAs;
- ✓ Awareness raising about ICCAs should be carried out with rightholders and stakeholders with reliance on existing laws and commitments at national and international levels (such as international conventions);
- ✓ At least 30% of broadcast programmes (radio and TV) should be dedicated to IP and LC issues and possibly co-run with them;
- ✓ Alliances should be promoted to review and reverse inappropriate policies and programmes for natural resource management, such as nationalisation of natural resources, top-down government projects on rangelands management and other failed national projects;
- ✓ Continuous support and facilitation should be offered to the establishment and/or operation of local, regional and national networks, federations and unions of camel herders, nomadic pastoralists, forest peoples, small-scale producers, fisherfolk, trappers and other users of biodiversity resources and their related ICCAs in the county;
- ✓ Awareness raising and defence of customary rights and ICCAs should be offered wherever large-scale development projects (e.g., dams, infrastructures, factories, mining, oil and gas extraction, etc.) are being planned and implemented.

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## Annex 1: Some representatives ICCAs of Iran




Type of ecosystem / Site Name	Location	Main characteristics
<b>WETLAND ECOSYSTEMS</b>		
<p><b>Kushk-e Zar (Namdan) Wetland</b><sup>44</sup></p>  <p>Courtesy Mehdi Tohidpour, CENESTA</p>	<p>Namdan Plain Eqlid District, Fars Province</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Qashqai Tribal Confederacy, Shish Bayli Tribe, Kuhi and other subtribes (Turkish-speaking mobile pastoralists). While the entire migration territory of Qashqai nomads is a general ICCA that fits the definition, Namdan Wetland is considered a special ICCA. The length of this wetland in rainy years is about 8-10 Km with an area of some 2,200 hectares;</li> <li>• First ICCA recognized by DOE in Iran since 2005 in an official letter from the Department of the Environment to the DOE in Fars Province;</li> <li>• Practicing Customary laws for the protection and sustainable use of the wetland, coupled with customary range management system in the associated rangelands around the wetland;</li> <li>• Livelihoods of MIPs (mobile indigenous peoples) of the Qashqai Tribal Confederacy depends in part on this conserved wetland, including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ watering needs for limited agriculture;</li> <li>○ livestock keeping;</li> <li>○ handicrafts based on harvesting reeds;</li> <li>○ fishing;</li> <li>○ bee-keeping;</li> <li>○ medicinal plants;</li> <li>○ industrial plants;</li> <li>○ edible plants;</li> <li>○ and rarely, hunting;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The wetland helps the nomadic peoples conserve valuable flora and fauna of the region;</li> <li>• Governance by the Council of Elders, including their Sustainable Livelihoods Funds of Shis-Bayli Tribe as well as Kuhi Sub Tribe (registered and based on their customary tribal organisation);</li> <li>• Government claims ownership based on Article 16 of the Environmental Protection Law, and the so-called nationalisation of natural resources in 1963, but IPs have customary rights over their territory reflected in a system of grazing permits based on established customary rights and demand their collective rights based on the desire to repeal the 1963 decree;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Damgahs (Doumas) of Fereydun-kenar, Sorkhrud and Ezbaran</b><sup>45</sup></p>	<p>Fereydunkenar and Amol Districts, Mazandaran Province (region of the Caspian Sea)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonal wetlands alternating between rice farming and birding, about 300-400 ha;</li> <li>• Sedentary local communities (traditional seasonal trappers, hunters and rice growers), Mazani-speaking Tabari people;</li> <li>• These wetlands are the wintering habitat of more than 45 species of waterfowl including the critically-endangered Siberian crane;</li> <li>• In the summer, when all the waterfowl leave the area, the</li> </ul>

<sup>44</sup> CENESTA. 2004. *Char Tang-e Kushk-e Zar Wetland: a Community Conserved Area, Eqlid Township, Fars Province (Zagros Region)*. CENESTA, IIED, Council of Elders of the Kuhi sub-tribe and UNDP-GEF-SGP. Tehran.

<sup>45</sup> Cooperative of Ezbaran Damgahdaran. 2007. *Pesticide Free Rice Project through IPM/FFS in Ezbaran Village, Caspian Region*. Cooperative of Ezbaran Damgahdaran and UNDP-GEF-SGP. Np.

 <p>Courtesy Abbas Didari, CENESTA</p>  <p>Courtesy <a href="http://www.vahsh.ir">www.vahsh.ir</a></p>		<p>wetlands are used for one period of seasonal rice cultivation, taking care not to use harmful chemicals. The residual rice grains are left in the autumn for the waterfowl to feed on as soon as they come. Additional grains are provided as needed to ensure a rich population of the waterfowl.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very traditional trapping techniques are used that can only harvest a small percentage of the waterfowl. A very high awareness of the habits, behaviour and conservation needs of the waterfowl exists among these traditional trappers, who take every care not to overharvest, and not to allow shooting by anyone for hunting; they are also careful to ensure their techniques are not harmful to the more endangered birds such as the Siberian crane. They have a precise knowledge of the natural history and taxonomy of the waterfowl, and a love for their conservation;</li> <li>• Formally recognised as an ICCA since 2001, given the status of No-Hunting Zone &amp; Ramsar Site since 2003 by the Department of the Environment, who have a working relationship with the community and actively consider them partners in conservation. A recent GEF-sponsored project for the conservation of the Siberian crane was implemented jointly by the DOE and the traditional trappers;</li> <li>• The indigenous and traditional management knowledge of trappers and keepers of wildfowl is very strong. At least since 50 years ago trappers gather every August to make management decisions about water distribution, designate guards, collect money for common purposes, and divide roles for the new season;</li> <li>• There is also a good relationship with the banking system in which they regularly apply for loans for improvement of the habitats.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sulduz (or Sirangöli) Wetland<sup>46</sup></b></p>  <p><a href="http://www.ostan-ag.gov.ir/tabid/952/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1326/----90--.aspx">http://www.ostan-ag.gov.ir/tabid/952/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1326/----90--.aspx</a></p>  <p>Courtesy Anon.</p>	<p>Naqadeh (West Azerbaijan Province)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4,500 ha;</li> <li>• Urban and sedentary villagers; Azeri (Turkish speaking) ethnic group;</li> <li>• Considered as a government protected area since 1963, the wetland had suffered greatly from neglect and unfavourable development. Since approximately 2000 a local NGO, through community mobilisation and with some financial support from UNDP/GEF/SGP has revived the wetland environment by restoring the old water channels;</li> <li>• Livelihood activities have traditionally depended on this wetland, including livestock breeding plus rangeland and water management and other resources have supported the communities around the wetland since time immemorial. The wetland also has cultural values, including community identity;</li> <li>• A variety of plant and animal species (including migratory birds are supported by the wetland);</li> <li>• Distribution of water between these wetlands and the surrounding agricultural lands has been a collective community decision making process for centuries,</li> <li>• Local governance of the wetlands by the communities has been an effective part of the managed water resources of the wetlands on the southern side of the now endangered Lake Urmia Ramsar site; the resulting complex of 4 wetlands was known as the southern “Green Belt”.</li> </ul>

<sup>46</sup> Umbrella Group of Naghadeh NGOs of West Azarbaijan. 2006. *Rehabilitation of Hassanlou Wetland, West Azerbaijan*. Umbrella Group of Naghadeh NGOs of West Azarbaijan and UNDP-GEF-SGP. Np.




 <p>Courtesy Anon.</p>		
<p><b>Traditional Ab-Bandans in the Caspian Sea region</b><sup>47</sup></p>  <p>Courtesy Mehdi Hassannezhad, CENESTA</p>	<p>Guilan, Mazandaran &amp; Golestan (South Turkmenistan) Provinces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimated at some 8,500 hectares,</li> <li>• Guilaki, Mazani (LCs), Turkmen (IPs) in 3 Caspian provinces of Iran (Guilan, Mazandaran, and Golestan);</li> <li>• These are community conserved areas with customary rules and management systems;</li> <li>• Ab-Bandan is a type of artificial wetland created and managed as an ICCA with strong livelihood and conservation aspects. It is a huge pool shaped form earth by scooping and excavation of an area followed by piling and beating the earth to build an earth wall around the pond;</li> <li>• Traditional structure of water supply belongs to northern provinces of Iran with different names: “<i>Sell</i>” in Guilan, “<i>Andoon</i>” in Mazandaran and “<i>Bandsaar</i>” in Golestan. Almost all Ab-Bandans have been built beside rice farms (<i>Shalizar</i>) which makes water transferring way shorter, so it has a leading role in preventing water loss through penetration in ground or evaporation.</li> <li>• Suitable ecological places for life of various bird species in particular for migratory birds overwintering such as ducks, <i>parla</i><sup>48</sup>, pelicans, swans, crowned ducks, etc.</li> <li>• Important role in local communities livelihoods, job creation, protein supply sources for locals;</li> <li>• During hundreds of years local communities have conserved these sources through customary rules and laws known as “Ab-Bandan-Dar” system.</li> <li>• Originally a community owned system, it is often given to the care of individuals or small groups from the community;</li> <li>• Warm water fish production, reserving water in rainy seasons for both rice cultivation and drinking water;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Modified Ab-Bandan in Anzali Lagoon</b><sup>49</sup></p>  <p>Courtesy Mehdi Hassannezhad, CENESTA</p>	<p>Anzali District, within the Anzali Wetland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 3,000 hectares; 60 Ab-Bandans in Anzali Wetland minimum 10 hectare– Maximum 100 hectare;</li> <li>• Gilaki local communities (sedentary villagers and some urban people), 87 groups of Ab-Bandan-Daran (each group includes 10-15 members);</li> <li>• Although the law provides for the autonomy of such areas in the Anzali Lagoon, the Department of Environment has taken upon itself to claim ownership of the entire Lagoon<sup>50</sup> and now gives <i>de-facto</i> rental contracts of the groups. In the process, however, this has caused some loss of sense of ownership of these ICCAs, tending to treat the ab-bandans as <i>res nullius</i> or open access resource regime, especially since the DOE has</li> </ul>

<sup>47</sup> CENESTA. 2012. *Anzali Wetland Ecological Management Project, Socio-economic Survey [Part-2]*. CENESTA, DOE and JAICA, Tehran.






<sup>48</sup> Perla is a native bird of Iran, black, with its head and neck shinier than the rest of the body, and its beak and forehead white.

<sup>49</sup> CENESTA. 2012. *Anzali Wetland Ecological Management Project, Socio-economic Survey [Part-2]*. CENESTA, DOE and JAICA, Tehran.

<sup>50</sup> The details of this complexity are explained in the legal ICCA study.




		<p>been subject to awarding large areas of these traditional wetlands to powerful pressure groups. As far as the local community is concerned, they are organising themselves to defend their rights over these ab-bandans as ICCAs. A national NGO (Cenesta) has been working with both the local community and the DOE in order to help resolve the issues. Currently these sites are managed by Ab-Bandans for a six months period (September-March) each year under a rental agreement with the provincial DOE over the terms of which they have no control. The AbBandan-Dars are allowed to exploit fish and birds during hunting and fishing season, with clear, but ineffective and non-participatory specific environmental limits and prohibitions.</p>
<p><b>Kani Brazan<sup>51</sup></b></p>  <p>Courtesy Abbas Didari, CENESTA</p>	<p>West Azerbaijan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80 hectares;</li> <li>• Azeri Turks and Kurds, settled villagers;</li> <li>• Soon the wetland will be announced as a wildlife refuge by DOE. Negotiations are on-going for the recognition of the rights of the local communities to their ICCA in this Ramsar site, with reasonable prospects;</li> <li>• Livelihood dependency of local communities;</li> <li>• Selected as the first bird watching site of the country</li> <li>• Habitats of valuable waterfowl and other valuable fauna and flora;</li> <li>• Local community, local authorities, DOE are trying to set up a co-management system for wetland resource management on this site, with the support of Cenesta and another NGO;</li> </ul>
<b>MARINE ECOSYSTEMS</b>		
<p><b>Traditional fishing (Damgostar) in southern coasts of the Caspian Sea</b></p>  <p><a href="http://www.javanonline.ir/vgljimevxuqeymw..suufzfb8.html">http://www.javanonline.ir/vgljimevxuqeymw..suufzfb8.html</a></p>  <p><a href="http://www.javanonline.ir/vgljimevxuqeymw..suufzfb8.html">http://www.javanonline.ir/vgljimevxuqeymw..suufzfb8.html</a></p>	<p>Tonekabon (Mazandaran Province)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10-15km along the coast;</li> <li>• Tonekabon, traditional fisherfolk of Tonekabon;</li> <li>• Since 1990s fishing rights have been bought back by the State Fisheries Corporation (Sheelat);</li> <li>• Fishing to sustain livelihoods. The sea has also spiritual and cultural values, and the indigenous knowledge of the fishing communities have sustained the practices and have conserved the fishing grounds, including in the rivers that flow to the Caspian sea where many fish have their spawning grounds;</li> <li>• A variety of sturgeon (including those producing commercial grade Caviar) as well as non-sturgeon fish such as the Caspian salmon;</li> <li>• Elders and most skilled fishermen took the most important decision regarding time and method for fishing;</li> <li>• Despite government's recent ownership claim, the ICCA is managed much as before;</li> <li>• Fishing and tourism.</li> </ul>

<sup>51</sup> Khor Khoreh Community Based Organisation. 2009. *Empowerment of Khor Khoreh Local Community for Conservation of Kaniborazan Wetland and its Biodiversity, West Azerbaijan*. Khor Khoreh Community Based Organisation and UNDP-GEF-SGP. Np.

 <p><a href="http://www.javanonline.ir/vgljimevxu/geymw..suufzfb8.html">http://www.javanonline.ir/vgljimevxu/geymw..suufzfb8.html</a></p>		
<p><b>Qeshm Island (north-western Indian Ocean)</b> 52</p>  <p>Courtesy Anon.</p>  <p>M.E.H.R. <a href="http://www.hakimemehr.ir/news/show_detail.asp?id=5405">www.hakimemehr.ir/news/show_detail.asp?id=5405</a></p>  <p>Courtesy Anon.</p>	<p>Qeshm Island (Hormozgan Province)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 400 km of coastline</li> <li>• Traditional fishermen of Qeshm Island, settled, native languages include Bandari, Arabic; Persian understood, as is Urdu and sometimes English;</li> <li>• Sheelat has had jurisdiction over natural resources in the Persian Gulf since this State Fisheries Corporation established;</li> <li>• Fishing to sustain livelihoods in the sea; pearl diving has been a part of the activities traditionally, and marine mammals are also part of the conservation practiced. The practices have been highly conserving of the sea, coastal zones, and the coral reefs, and the communities' interest in preserving its conservation and sustainable practices has been very high. The sea and its resources also have spiritual and cultural values for people of Qeshm Island, including a sea-related spiritual and ethno-psychiatric cult of "Zar" which is common to the entire northwest Indian Ocean, the Horn of Africa and the rest of East Africa;</li> <li>• Elders and community leaders (Most skilled fishermen) are engaged in the governance of the natural resources</li> <li>• At present fisheries is legally under Sheelat control</li> <li>• Fishing + marine trade, boat making, and other activities are a part of this unique bio-cultural environment;</li> <li>• Support by UNDP/GEF/SGP has helped the engagement of the DOE and the Special Free Economic Zone Authority in the recognition of the ICCAs including mangrove forests.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Salakh ICCAs in Qeshm Island</b><sup>53</sup></p>  <p>Courtesy Anon.</p>	<p>Qeshm Island (Hormozgan Province)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settled villagers of Salakh in Qeshm, native language of Bandari, understand Arabic and Persian;</li> <li>• Sheelat has had jurisdiction over natural resources in the Persian Gulf since it was established; a special "No-Take" Zone was established by local fishing community which is conserving an endangered marine turtle population;</li> <li>• Coral reefs as one of the hotspots of biodiversity; ecologically sensitive area (southern Qeshm Island, Persian Gulf).</li> <li>• Livelihood benefits and income generation aspect for the indigenous and local communities;</li> <li>• As a result of recent empowering work by NGOs and SGP, the community has gone back to the opportunity of using the sea and natural resources more wisely and saving it for future generations instead of exploiting their natural marine</li> </ul>

<sup>52</sup> Berkeh Khalaf Community Group. 2003. *Aquaculture of Pearl by the Local Community of Berkeh Khalaf Village, Qeshm Islan*. Berkeh Khalaf Community Group and UNDP-GEF-SGP. Np.

<sup>53</sup> Salakh Community Organization – Council of Salakh Village, 2005. *Rehabilitation of Marine Resources of the Persian Gulf in Salakh Region, Qeshm Island*. Salakh Community Organization – Council of Salakh Village and UNDP-GEF-SGP. Np.

		<p>resources unsustainably;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitation of Marine Resources of the Persian Gulf in Salakh Region (Qeshm Island)</li> <li>• Salakh Community Organization– Council of Salakh Village - Salakh CBO (Community Based Organization);</li> <li>• Rehabilitation of the natural marine resources through an indigenous method of artificial reefing;</li> <li>• Integration of Traditional knowledge and modern science in preparing coral rocks</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sacred Muger crocodile (<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>)</b></p>  <p><a href="http://www.mohitdar.blogfa.com/1391/04">http://www.mohitdar.blogfa.com/1391/04</a></p>	Sistan & Baluchistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mugger crocodile can be found in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and the southern parts of Iran. This is the only crocodile found in Iran which lives in the Sarbaz River, Chabahar area.</li> <li>• The indigenous people believe that this is a sacred species, which keep the river clean.</li> <li>• It is about centuries that they haven't hurt people and there is a peaceful symbiosis between them and crocodiles.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ecotourism for livelihood</b></p>  <p><a href="http://iren.ir/NSite/FullStory/?id=4810">http://iren.ir/NSite/FullStory/?id=4810</a></p>	Hormozgan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous people know the potential and environmental values of this area. Besides conservation, they profit from these natural resources for their livelihood through tourist attraction.</li> <li>• Sea turtles and Dolphins are some ecotourism features of this area.</li> <li>• In the recent years, local communities have provided a very friendly and attractive environment in their houses. They serve their traditional foods and sell their handicrafts to the tourists.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Selective and conservative fishing</b></p>  <p><a href="http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=811733">http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=811733</a></p>	Boushehr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gargour is a trap used for fishing consists of a frame of wire mesh in the shape of a hemisphere, with an entrance. When a fish swims inside through this opening, it cannot find the exit and get out. The notable point is that the wire mesh is properly designed for the small fishes to be able to escape and to keep the big ones.</li> <li>• Indigenous people leave it (Gargour) in the sea bottom for a whole day and then pull it up based on the floating attached crock indicator.</li> <li>• They release the useless trapped species.</li> <li>• The other fishing tools of the local people are made of natural materials. They believe that this is a natural and conservative method.</li> <li>• The traditional processing method for keeping the fish in this area is drying and salting which doesn't have any wastewater and pollution.</li> </ul>
<b>DESERT ECOSYSTEM</b>		
<p><b>Khar-Touran region<sup>54</sup></b></p>	Biarjomand District (Semnan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2000 ha (Cheshme Zak, Sanjari, Sar Agholi, Aghol Shirei)</li> <li>• Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy (one of the smallest, about 800 persons); their origin seems to be southern (Fars</li> </ul>

<sup>54</sup> CENESTA. 2011. Reviving Indigenous Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) in Customary Territories of Abolhasani Mobile Pastoralists— Coping with the Effects of Climate Change and Drought through Local Initiatives and Ecological Management, Kharturan Region, Central Desert of Iran. CENESTA and UNDP-GEF-SGP, Tehran.





Courtesy Maede Salimi, CENESTA



Courtesy Nahid Naqizadeh, CENESTA



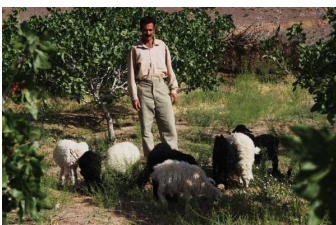
Courtesy Fatima Talebi, Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy



Courtesy Nahid Naghizadeh, CENESTA



Courtesy Abbas Didari, CENESTA

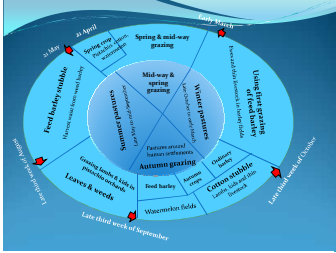





Courtesy Abbas Didari, CENESTA

Province)






Province) Luri tribes;

- Abolhassani Tribe migrates between summering and wintering territories annually;
- Although the government (Forest, Range and Watershed Management Organisation, FRWO) took formal possession of the rangelands of all indigenous tribes in Iran after the 1963 imposition by the Shah, the territory-based ICCA of this and other tribes are still managed by themselves essentially following customary knowledge and rules. The MIPs are now organising themselves to take more de facto and de jure control of their territories;
- Livelihood, cultural and spiritual values
- Unique desert flora and fauna. There is about 800 plant species alone, of which many are endangered but protected by community practices. Some 100-200 species are likely still unknown to modern science, although the community ethnobotanists know every one of them and their properties for people, animals and nature;
- Qantas (traditional ground water tapping systems) are in use and now being restored and re-habilitated;
- Elders and traditional leaders are still respected and listened to;
- A new project designed by the Abolhassani MIPs for territory-based rangeland and forest management, to strengthen the customary ICCA management approaches is also pending approval by the FRWO which would go beyond the recognition of their territory-based ICCAs;
- The region is also a part of a UNESCO MAB Biosphere Reserve, and includes wild populations of Asiatic cheetah, Asiatic

 <p>Courtesy Fahime Seifi &amp; Jeyran Farvar, CENESTA</p>		
<p><b>God-Maliran Camel ICCA<sup>55</sup></b></p>  <p>Courtesy Hamed Zolfaqari, CENESTA</p>  <p>Courtesy Abbas Didari, CENESTA</p>	<p>Bafq (Yazd Province)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100,000 ha;</li> <li>• Zariqan Village, Yazdi dialect of Persian;</li> <li>• Customary management of natural resources, especially rangelands and watering sources for animals is still practiced by the local community, although de jure ownership of the land was transferred to the FRWO after the 1963 imposition by the Shah, with a system of grazing permits in place, which follows very much the customary norms of rights of access;</li> <li>• Livelihood and cultural values;</li> <li>• A variety of plant and animal species (including Asiatic Cheetahs);</li> <li>• Rangelands are being managed collectively;</li> <li>• Primary economic activity is camel herding and breeding and some dryland agriculture;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Qazi Qanat<sup>56</sup></b></p>  <p>Courtesy Iman Amirsalehi</p>	<p>Bidgol, Kashan (Kashan Province)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 81 ha</li> <li>• 54 traditional owners from Bidgol, Kashi dialect of Persian;</li> <li>• Excellent example of a ground water-based ICCA;</li> <li>• To maintain and repair the channels of the Qanat, permission is obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development;</li> <li>• Livelihood, cultural and spiritual values. Many community rituals are still practiced for the governance of the Qanat;</li> <li>• Unique flora and fauna of desert environment, including some maintained through irrigation;</li> <li>• Elders and community leaders (most skilled persons) in charge of the decision-making;</li> <li>• Desert agriculture</li> </ul>

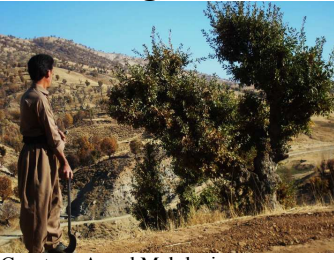



<sup>55</sup> CENESTA. 2008. Interview with Mohammad Reza Karimi, Indigenous Camel Herder of Zariqan Village, Bafq, Yazd Province. CENESTA, Tehran.

<sup>56</sup> CENESTA. 2004. *Qanat Irrigation Systems: An ancient water distribution system allowing specialised and diverse cropping in desert regions of Iran*, CENESTA and FAO, Tehran.

		
<p>Courtesy Iman Amirsalehi</p>		
		
<p>Courtesy Iman Amirsalehi</p>		
<b>FOREST ECOSYSTEM</b>		
<p><b>Sechah Dehsard<sup>57</sup></b></p>  <p>Courtesy Abbas Didari, CENESTA</p>	<p>Bafq (Kerman Province) Forest and Rangelands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40,000 ha</li> <li>• Tribal communities + rural communities (Cooperative of herders), Kermani dialect of Persian;</li> <li>• Settled villagers;</li> <li>• Livelihood</li> <li>• Valuable species of plants typical of this region</li> <li>• Right now the Cooperative of herders has the right over the rangelands in this area with more or less nominal supervision of the relevant government body. The Cooperative was formed only 10 years ago but tribal communities have been using and managing this area for centuries</li> <li>• Cooperative land that is managed as an ICCA and community/tribal territory;</li> <li>• Livestock grazing + forest products</li> </ul>
<p><b>Talesh Forests<sup>58</sup></b></p>  <p>Courtesy Mehdi Hassannezhad, CENESTA</p>  <p>Courtesy Mehdi Hassannezhad,</p>	<p>Khojdare, Talesh (Guilan Province)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,800 ha</li> <li>• Khojdare &amp; Lotum villages (50 households - 330 persons), Talesh nomads</li> <li>• Women stay in the village and work on agriculture lands, and men move with the cattle and there are customary transhumance territory</li> <li>• It is de jure government land according to Forest and Rangelands imposition by the Shah, 1963</li> <li>• Livelihood, cultural and spiritual values</li> <li>• Caspian forest are known for plant and animal biodiversity and Talesh region is one of the most pristine areas</li> <li>• Elders and community leaders</li> <li>• Government-claimed land with customary practices</li> <li>• Forestry + cattle herding</li> </ul>





<sup>57</sup> CENESTA. 2008. *Interview with Fatemeh Sadat Mahdavian, Anjomaneh Sabz Kushane Reygan (Reygan Sabz Kushan Assosiation), Kerman Province.* CENESTA, Tehran.

<sup>58</sup> CENESTA. 2008. *Report of Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on 'ICCAs and Natural Resource Management.* CENESTA and UNDP-GEF-SGP, Tehran.





CENESTA		
<p><b>Gala-zani in Havareh Khol Village<sup>59</sup></b></p>  <p>Courtesy Assad Mahdavi</p>  <p>Courtesy Assad Mahdavi</p>  <p>Courtesy Assad Mahdavi</p>  <p>Courtesy Maede Salimi, CENESTA</p>	<p>Baneh, Kurdistan Province (Iran) Oak Forest (northern Zagros)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 340 ha</li> <li>• Inhabitants of Havareh Khol Village, Kurds;</li> <li>• Since nationalization of the land (1963) conflicts have been over use of forest resources and traditional/local foresters have been fined for their traditional practices even though technical studies under an SGP grant have shown them to be highly sustainable and conservation oriented.</li> <li>• Extracting fodder for livestock, wood, fruits, hunting. Main livelihood is livestock breeding. The forest has also spiritual and cultural values;</li> <li>• Zagros forests are a unique ecosystem and oak (<i>Quercus spp.</i>) are a globally important element;</li> <li>• Galazani has been practiced since long time ago in this area. Since 1963 (Nationalization of the natural resources in Iran) it had been mandatory to get permission from the Natural Resources Bureau. With increasing population and loss of sense of ownership human pressure on forest and its resources has been accelerated. In 2004 a UNDP/SGP funded project helped bring back the attention of the Bureau of Natural Resources to the importance of community forestry based on traditional practices;</li> <li>• Management was based on decisions made by local traditional leaders, and the system has been effectively revived.</li> <li>• Land is officially owned by government but the villagers exercise their customary rights over it through a system of grazing permits. These forests are considered <i>de facto</i> ancient ICCAs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mangrove forest reserves of the Northwest Indian Ocean including the northern coasts of the Persian Gulf<sup>60</sup></b></p>	<p>Boushehr, Hormozgan and Sistan-Baluchistan Provinces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9,200 hectares traditionally managed by the respective traditional communities including indigenous Baluch, Arab and Bandari ethnic groups who have had their own customary governance systems and a rich indigenous knowledge of these habitats. The respective communities protect the mangrove forests and use them sustainably for camel browsing, fishing, wood and non-timber forest products;</li> <li>• The only habitat of tidal zones of tropical coastal areas in Iran;</li> <li>• Two species of mangrove trees: <i>Avicennia marina</i> and</li> </ul>

<sup>59</sup> Association of Young Conservationists (Daumoon). 2002. *Traditional Forest Management in Haverh-Khol Village, Kurdistan Province*. Association of Young Conservationists (Daumoon) and UNDP-GEF-SGP. Np.

<sup>60</sup> UNDP-GEF-SGP. nd. Various SGP project's documents on: *Community Empowerment for Mangrove Conservation in south of Iran*. UNDP-GEF-SGP, Tehran.

 <p>Courtesy Taghi Farvar, CENESTA</p>  <p>Courtesy Anon.</p>		<p><i>Rhizophora mucrinata</i>, the latter being in Sirik coves with limited coverage. The rest is <i>Avicennia marina</i>;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past, the use of mangrove wood was for fuel, but now its leaves are used for livestock grazing (especially camel feed) and its flowers for making honey;</li> <li>• Because of mangrove special aquatic habitat, it is used for shrimp breeding and other aquatic species breeding;</li> <li>• The Mangroves of Khamir and Qeshm region are protected areas and they are the only coastal biosphere reserves in southern waters of the country;</li> <li>• Mangrove forests in the Chabahar and Male-Ganzeh are located in Mand and Bahu Kalat protected areas;</li> <li>• Three habitats of Mangrove forests are in the list of international wetlands in Ramsar Convention (habitats located in Khamir-Qeshm, Tiyaab-o-Kolahi and Sirik coves);</li> <li>• Mangrove forests habitats distribution in Bushehr province (in northern coastal zones of Persian Gulf), are very rare even on a global scale and are the last distribution of such habitats in northwest coastal areas of the Indian Ocean.</li> </ul>
<p><b>White mangrove (<i>Avicennia marina</i>) lopping</b></p>  <p><a href="http://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A7">http://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A7</a></p>	<p>Sistan &amp; Baluchistan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>Harra</i> forest is the common name for mangrove forests on the southern coast of Iran, dominated by the species <i>Avicennia marina</i>, known locally as the <i>harra</i> tree. These forests represent an important ecological resource.</li> <li>• During 2 months of the species regeneration, indigenous people strictly conserve (isolate) the natural habitat but just after this duration, they take their camels there for grazing. They believe that it helps the species reproduction and sustainability.</li> </ul>
<b>RANGELAND AND GRASSLAND</b>		
<p><b>Inverted Tulips Plain, Summering grounds of Hamuleh Tribe of Bakhtiari Tribal Confederacy<sup>61</sup></b></p>  <p>Courtesy Siavash Rostami</p>	<p>Chelgerd, Kuhrang (Char-Mahan-Bakhtiari Province),</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. 2,000ha (inverted tulips plain) Total territory of Bakhtiari Confederation is nearly 2,000,000 hectares, a part of their summering territory</li> <li>• Hamuleh tribe, 500 tentholds, indigenous mobile Pastoralists, Luri language</li> <li>• Not settled permanently. (they have their customary territory including summering and wintering grounds, migratory routes and half way rangelands)</li> <li>• Conflicts because of the Nationalization of Rangelands, the local community have to obey government rules for entering and leaving the territory but usually practice their own customary systems;</li> <li>• Livelihood and culture</li> <li>• Diversity of flora and fauna including medicinal and food value. Plants such as: wild celery, shallot, wild garlic, mushroom, wild pennyroyal, acanthus, rhubarb, marjoram, mountain sesame, etc. and fauna such as: wild goat, partridge, rabbit, mountain sheep, leopard, bear;</li> <li>• Summering ground of Hamuleh Tribe, but in 2005 a part of the plain was declared by the DOE as a natural monument.</li> </ul>

<sup>61</sup> CENESTA. 2011. *Restoring Traditional Inverted Tulip ICCA in the Summering Ground of the Bakhtiari Tribal Confederation, Hamuleh Tribe*. CENESTA, UNDP/GEF/SGP and Council of Elders, Sustainable livelihood Fund of Bakhtiari Tribal Confederacy, Tehran.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customary management of the Rangelands by community elders</li> <li>• Community common property regime, despite the government's claims of ownership;</li> <li>• Rangeland, very limited agricultural land and mountainous areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Moghan Plain, Anghout and Savalan</b><sup>62</sup></p> 	<p>Ardebil &amp; East Azerbaijan Provinces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,163,000 ha</li> <li>• Shahsevan Tribal Confederacy (approx. 100,000 persons), mobile pastoralists, indigenous Azeri (Turk)</li> <li>• FRWO has jurisdiction over land that is still often managed with customary rules by Shahsevans, conflicts with government after nationalization law in 1963)</li> <li>• Livelihood and cultural values</li> <li>• Bear– gazelle– wild pig birds of prey– fish– etc.</li> <li>• Elders and traditional leaders are still respected, and that have revived the confederacy,</li> <li>• Rangeland management</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lebd-e Bala</b><sup>63</sup> (Upper Lebd)</p>  	<p>Char-Mahal &amp; Bakhtiari Province, Bazoft region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 500 ha 150 sgp</li> <li>• Bakhtiari Tribal Confederacy, Farrokhvand Tribe, Lori indigenous peoples</li> <li>• The area is part of the ancestral domain territory of the Farrokhvand Tribe, the whole of which is considered to be a customary ICCA. Lebd-e Bala is the spring and autumn grounds, consisting of wild rangelands as well as managed agroforestry. The Tribe has decided to restore the wild rangeland parts of the territory by applying their customary laws and indigenous knowledge, including the use of traditional tribal rangers;</li> <li>• The FRWO has decided to support these community efforts by guaranteeing the territorial integrity of this part of the ICCA, to be extended to the strengthening and restoration of the full territorial ICCA, and the consolidation of tribal control and governance rights over the entire territory. FRWO is also to formally recognise the community rangers by awarding them badges, and by accepting a “territory-based range management programme” for the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of the ancestral domain territory ICCA.</li> <li>• Customary laws and management of Farrokhvand sub-tribe, but under nominal control of FRWO because of the nationalisation decree of rangelands in 1963;</li> <li>• Livelihood and spiritual and cultural values,</li> <li>• Inverted tulip, mountain celery, mountain shallot, wild garlic, others</li> <li>• <i>De jure</i><sup>64</sup> owned by government but is a part of customary</li> </ul>

<sup>62</sup> CENESTA. 2007. *Governance and Ecosystems Management for the Conservation of Biodiversity*, GEM-CON-BIO Shahsevan Nomadic Pastoralists Case Study Report, CENESTA and EU, Tehran.

<sup>63</sup> CENESTA. 2012. *Restoring Traditional Inverted Tulip ICCA in the Midpoint Resting Grounds of the Bakhtiari Tribal Confederation, Farrokhvand Tribe*. CENESTA, UNDP-GEF-SGP and Council of Elders, Sustainable Livelihood Fund of Bakhtiari Tribal Confederacy, Tehran.

<sup>64</sup> The legal basis for this claim seems now to have shaky grounds, since what was by common mistake thought of as a ‘Law’ of Nationalisation of Natural Resources has now been discovered to have been no more than a Decree by the Council of Ministers, which, in Iranian jurisprudence, cannot alienate property rights from either individuals or communities. This Decree was forced through the Council of Minister in 1963 by the ex-Shah of Iran who was determined to sedentarise, control and eliminate the roughly 100 nomadic tribal confederacies and 600 independent tribes. In 1963, Iran’s population was registered by the National



Courtesy Siavash Rostami

territory of Farrokhvand tribe;<sup>65</sup>

- Rangelands

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Commission for UNESCO to be some 21 million, of which close to 10% was estimated to have been indigenous nomadic peoples – down from an estimate of over 25% about 40 years earlier, when the Shah’s father embarked on an all-out military campaign to forcibly sedentarise and eliminate these peoples. In 1976 researchers estimated the nomadic tribal population of the country to be some 2.4 million – i.e. 7.1% of the population (Moussavi-Nejad 2003). More recently, despite 20 years of enormous pressure through the national Five-Year Development Plans and systematic attempts at induced sedentarisation, whereby the migrating nomadic population was to have been reduced from about 200,000 tentholds to zero, the actively migrating indigenous nomadic population of the country had increased in 2011 to 220,000 tentholds, an increase of 10% (Statistical Centre 2008).

<sup>65</sup> Moussavi-Nejad, E. 2003. Censuses of Pastoral Nomads and Some General Remarks about the Census of Nomadic Tribes of Iran in 1998. *Nomadic Peoples*, Volume 7, Issue 2.

## **Annex 2: Recognition letter of Kushk-e-Zar Wetland as ICCA by the Department of the Environment**

To: HE Mr Abadi  
Director General  
Department of the Environment  
Province of Fars

Greetings,

Referring to our previous correspondence on Kushk-e-Zar Wetland in Namdan Plane and in respect of Article 16 of the Law of Environmental Conservation and Improvement concerning the authority of the Department of the Environment over wetlands of the country, please find attached the map of Kushk-e-Zar Wetland produced by DoE experts and local stakeholders using GPS. Kindly issue instructions to all concerned Departments of the Province of Fars, including the Bureau of Natural Resource (FRWO), the Bureau of Nomadic Pastoralist (ONPI) and other relevant government organisations to avoid any agreement whatsoever with the change of land use plans of this wetland and its surroundings, and to prevent any destruction and pollution of same.

As you are aware, on the basis of the proposal by the civil society organisation CENESTA, it has been decided for the first time to apply the model of community conserved area to this wetland ecosystem (which is part of the summering grounds in the territory preserved for the Qashqai Tribal Confederacy), and that any economic activities in the area would happen only if compatible with the integrity of the environment and with the full participation of the relevant stakeholders. It is clear that the first step in protecting this wetland is to remove any contrary claims to land use and the prevention of its degradation and destruction—duties that are legally entrusted to the Department of the Environment. Kindly keep this office informed of all follow up actions.

Attached please find a copy of the said proposal which provides for the support of the GEF Small Grants Programme for this wetland which is signed among SGP, CENESTA and the Kuhi Subtribe of the Qashqai Tribal Confederacy.

Farhang Qasriyani  
Director General of Habitats and protected Areas  
Department of the Environment

Cc: Office of Wetlands, DOE for Information and Follow-up  
(Date: 20 April 2005, Letter No. 33-407)



### **Annex 3: Declaration of the First ICCA Workshop in Iran**

We the participants in the multi stakeholder workshop on “Indigenous and Community-Conserved Areas (ICCAs)” held on 8-9 July 2008 at the GEF/ SGP in the United Nations Development Programme in Teheran, Iran, representing concerned traditional and indigenous communities, civil society organisations, government agencies and academics, draw attention to the following workshop results and recommendations:

**WE RECOGNISE** that:

1. There are many examples of ICCAs in all the various biomes of Iran—territories and areas conserved excellently for thousands of years by their respective peoples and communities through their own indigenous knowledge and customary laws, rules and institutions;
2. These ICCAs have an important role in the conservation of nature, be it coastal, mountain, desert, forest, rangeland, wetland and marine environments, and in the livelihoods of their respective communities and peoples;
3. ICCAs have been under threat since about 50 years ago due to internal and external pressures, especially the nationalisation of natural resources resulting in interference by outside actors in their governance. Nonetheless they still cover a large part of the country. Biodiversity resources are usually better conserved in ICCAs than in other areas.

As a result, **WE RECOMMEND** that:

1. ICCAs should be officially recognized in the context of the customary laws governing them, as per the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
2. The governance systems of ICCAs should be included in decision-making over natural resources as the key right-holders in any case where there is a need for any change, using the principles of free prior and informed consent;
3. Sense of ownership of ICCAs need to be enhanced in a better regulatory framework, primarily through restoration of rights and security of tenure for the communities that have conserved and used them sustainably, and preserving and promoting the relevant indigenous knowledge and customary institutions;
4. Networks of ICCAs should be formed at local, regional and national levels;
5. Role of ICCAs as contributors to local livelihoods and the national economy should be recognised and enhanced;
6. ICCAs should be able to sustain their livelihoods and gain additional income (through community owned ecotourism, medicinal plants, handicrafts, etc.);
7. Indigenous knowledge needs to be better understood, recognised and applied (respecting the intellectual property rights of ICCAs).

Signed by 32 representatives

#### **Annex 4: Summary of Territory-Base Sustainable Range Management Programme (TBSRM)**

Indigenous nomadic peoples in Iran have consistently identified control of their territories as ICCAs as one of their main priorities. Since 2003 CENESTA has been working with them to help them revive their customary institutions; over the last several years the work entered a new phase of getting closer to achieving their main goal: to secure control over their territories and their conservation and sustainable use regimes in accordance with their indigenous knowledge.

The result, which is a proposal for a Territory-based Rangeland Management Programme aims at improving rangeland management and conservation, and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for nomadic communities. Since the main rationale currently used to deprive nomads of access to their lands is that they are destroying the ecosystems, the project recognises that securing access to their territories touches on issues related to knowledge, science and research systems (Farvar 2003)<sup>66</sup>.

The main incentive for the government to hand back management of territories to nomadic councils is to assure the sustainable management and use of the rangelands. Over the past decades efforts have been made by governmental organizations to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources but these have been unsuccessful due to the lack of participation of the right-holders (the nomads) in decision-making, policy-making, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

The fact that it has taken three years of work and many meetings simply to develop the project proposal shows that this is a difficult challenge that faces some opposition. We expect that this year the first part of this project will be implemented in several tribes of the Shahsevan and then become a model for other tribes and regions of the country. Its aims are:

- Strengthening traditional and indigenous governance and management systems for conservation and sustainable use;
- Revival and promotion of indigenous knowledge of conservation and sustainable use;
- Improving managerial and executive capacities of nomadic communities;
- Strengthening the sense of belonging of tribes to their territories;
- Sustainable use of natural resources on tribal territories;
- Creating a diversity of incomes and strengthening sustainable livelihoods;
- Respect for customary rights to their territories and ICCAs.

All stakeholders recognise the importance of benefiting from the best of both indigenous knowledge and formal knowledge systems. To achieve this, the project is based on three main strategies:

- Ensuring that any research activities that need to be undertaken at any stage of the project (including monitoring and evaluation) are conducted in a participatory manner controlled by the nomadic communities;
- Introducing the concept of non-equilibrium ecosystems (NEE) as the basis for range management which inherently validates and recognises indigenous knowledge related to range management and conservation;
- Integrating and benefiting from both traditional and formal knowledge.

The NEE approach has been advocated strongly by CENESTA others and an increasing number of pastoralists and government experts are aware of it. Recently the ground-breaking publication “Rethinking range ecology: implications for rangeland management in Africa”

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<sup>66</sup> Farvar, M.T. 2003. Myths, challenges and questions on mobile pastoralism in West Asia. *Policy Matters*, No. 12. Published for IUCN-CEESP by CENESTA, Tehran .

(R.H. Behnke and I. Scoones, London, IIED and ODI 1992) was translated and made available. A presentation on NEE was also elaborated for the first meeting of the “Knowledge-sharing” group mentioned above.

Some of the activities that have a research aspect to them and would be conducted with participatory methodologies are:

- Introduction of the concept of non-equilibrium ecosystems (NEE) based on indigenous knowledge as the basis for range management;
- Collection of all relevant information about range management projects in the selected territory and updating and combining all economic, social and ecological studies;
- Community mapping of their customary territorial limits;
- Community monitoring and evaluation of the first phase of the project.