

## **DISCUSSION PAPER 6:**

**INDIGENOUS WISDOM SECTOR** (HERITAGE SCHOOLS, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES, INDIGENOUS GAMES, HERITAGE VILLAGES)

The Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) or AKS Policy is an enabling framework to stimulate and strengthen the contribution of indigenous knowledge to social and economic development in South Africa.

**Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) have an important contribution to make to socioeconomic growth and sustainable development and should be promoted and encouraged.**

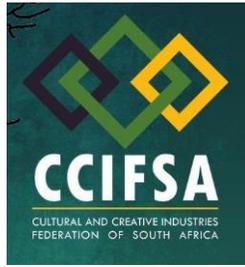
According to the World Health Organisation, a large majority of the African population make use of traditional medicines for health, social-cultural and economic reasons. In Africa, up to 80% of the population uses traditional medicine for primary healthcare.

In South Africa specifically, studies have shown traditional medicine to play an important role in the management of certain ailments, while at the same time the sale of traditional and indigenous products has beneficial effects on poverty reduction and employment creation. It is also recognised that indigenous knowledge systems are a resource that provides a firm foundation for sustainable and environmentally sound approaches to agriculture, in particular, and natural resource management in general.

In the 2009 round of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), questions on IKS aimed to obtain baseline data on perceptions and attitudes towards various IKS and related issues. These issues include western science versus traditional knowledge, the role of IKS in formal curricula, women's roles in IKS, the government's role in IKS, and traditional agricultural and medicinal practices. A national sample of 3 307 respondents participated.

### **Generally positive attitude**

Overall, findings indicate a positive attitude towards IKS, which serves to support the idea that IKS can be a leading contributor to South Africa's progress and development. More than half of South Africans (53%) believe that modern science does more harm than good, two-thirds (66%) felt that IKS offers lessons that can benefit everybody, 71% felt we trust too much in science and not enough in indigenous knowledge and 72% stated we trust too much in science and not enough in cultural beliefs and practices.



### **IKS in the education context**

The inclusion of IKS in a formal education setting was explored during the survey and the majority of people agreed that IKS should be included at various educational levels. Just more than half (53%) of respondents agreed that children do learn to respect IKS practices at school. The majority of respondents wanted: the department of education to include IKS in the school curriculum (76%); traditional healers to receive formal qualifications for their skills (65%); indigenous skills to be offered at vocational training institutes (73%); and universities to offer degrees in IKS (69%).

When asked about traditional agriculture and traditional and medicinal plants, seven in ten people agreed (71%) that traditional agriculture plays an important role in providing livelihoods for South Africans, two-thirds (67%) agreed that traditional agriculture plays an important role in reducing poverty and 74% agreed that traditional medicinal plants can lead to great medical discoveries.

Provinces such as the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal are more supportive of IKS, and the Free State and Western Cape are least supportive. Encouragingly, younger people tend to be just as interested in IKS as older age groups.

The majority (60%) felt that big businesses are exploiting the indigenous knowledge of communities and that government should be proactive in this respect.

### **Government's involvement in IKS preservation, protection and support**

Three-quarters (76%) of South Africans feel that government should do more to document IKS in South Africa. The majority was in favour of the government doing more to support communities involved in IKS, to promote small business using IKS, and to spend more on protecting IKS.

Results from this survey clearly mandate government to implement policies that promote and protect IKS, and show that there is a place for a culture-derived and culture-driven development framework based on local knowledge of people and communities.

### **DISCUSSION:**

**How aware are creatives of IKS, and should policies be implemented to foster awareness in South Africa? How creative should influence AKS/IKS content in their works and products? Community Arts Centres as drivers of AKS in communities?**

