INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ FORUM AT IFAD
11-12 February 2013
Summary of the first global meeting of the forum

At the first global meeting of the Forum indigenous peoples’ representatives underscored their commitment to partnering with IFAD in working towards the ambitious goal of reducing rural poverty, pointing out that there can be no sustainable rural development without indigenous peoples. Establishment of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum, they pointed out, reflected a ‘higher ground’ in the partnership with IFAD. They reflected on the challenges remaining, such as the failure of some states to adequately recognize indigenous peoples in national legislation and policies, and the lack of systematic application of IFAD’s Policy on Engagement and provisions on free, prior and informed consent.

The indigenous peoples’ representatives identified specific actions to be taken by IFAD, governments and indigenous peoples’ groups, as reported in the Synthesis of Deliberations (see below). The representatives called on IFAD for more capacity-building support, more efforts to encourage participation by indigenous peoples and more effective implementation of the Policy on Engagement. They called on governments to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and build government capacity to address their needs and priorities. And they pledged themselves to work with IFAD and governments to develop sustainable development models for their people and to work with governments on policies that promote such development.

A story on IFAD support to community-based tourism in the Ecuadorian Amazon was presented by Pedro Tzerembo, from the Shuar people. Tzerembo brought a message of peace and wisdom from those who struggle to survive deep in the forest. Referring especially to the presence of large extraction companies that pose a threat to the home of indigenous peoples, he called for an end to harmful forms of development. He welcomed the support and commitment of IFAD, particularly through its financing of a project to strengthen cultural identity through the production of typical arts and crafts, music and dance.
Indigenous peoples’ forum at IFAD

The Indigenous Peoples’ Forum, the culmination of 35 years of IFAD engagement with indigenous peoples, is meant to provide a voice for the approximately 370 million indigenous people around the world, who are disproportionately represented among poor and marginalized populations. It is a response to requests by indigenous peoples for a more systematic dialogue with United Nations agencies. IFAD has become an important partner for indigenous peoples. The Forum builds on the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (2009), which in turn was informed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). The Forum also reflects IFAD’s long experience in empowering poor rural communities and its participatory approach to grass-roots rural development.

The Forum had its first global meeting on 11-12 February 2013 at IFAD headquarters in Rome.

Improving accountability and leadership

The IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples envisaged the Forum as a concrete way to institutionalize consultation and dialogue with indigenous peoples, “to improve IFAD’s accountability to its target groups and its development effectiveness, and to exercise a leadership role among international development institutions.” The Indigenous Peoples’ Forum was established in February 2011 at a workshop in Rome involving 28 representatives of indigenous peoples’ organizations from around the world. The Forum’s objectives are to:

- Monitor and evaluate implementation of the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, including its contribution to realizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and share and discuss the findings with IFAD staff, Member States and representatives of indigenous peoples.
- Build and strengthen partnerships between IFAD and indigenous peoples in order to address poverty and sustainable development in a way that reflects culture and identity, taking into account the perspectives and aspirations of indigenous peoples.
- Promote the participation of indigenous peoples’ organizations in IFAD activities at the country, regional and international levels and at all stages of project and programme cycles, and support capacity-building of indigenous peoples’ organizations.

The Forum will meet every other year, in connection with IFAD’s Governing Council in February. It will bring together 20 to 30 indigenous peoples’ representatives, including board members of the IFAD Indigenous Peoples’ Assistance Facility, selected members of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, representatives of indigenous peoples’ communities involved in IFAD-supported programmes, and representatives of national and regional indigenous peoples’ organizations.

The Forum is governed by a Steering Committee whose membership consists of seven representatives of indigenous peoples’ organizations (two each from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, and one from the Pacific); one representative of the Indigenous Peoples’ Assistance Facility Board; one representative of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; and four IFAD representatives. IFAD serves as the Secretariat of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is gender balanced and its members are knowledgeable about IFAD-funded programmes. It develops the agenda of the Forum sessions, endorses participants proposed by the regions and coordinates activities to take place between the Forum global sessions.

The participants in the February 2011 workshop developed a road map to guide preparation of the first global session of the Forum. An interim Steering Committee was also formed to lead implementation of the road map. The focus in 2011 was on raising awareness, establishing communications between indigenous peoples’ groups and IFAD staff, and informing members of the Steering Committee about IFAD actions involving indigenous peoples.
In 2012 regional workshops were held in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean to prepare for the global session. Their purpose was to ensure that the Forum represents the diversity of indigenous peoples from these regions and to gather the perspectives and recommendations from indigenous peoples’ organizations in each region. The findings and recommendations of the workshops informed the first global meeting of the Forum.1

The road map also called for the preparation of case studies on IFAD-funded projects by indigenous peoples.

**Survey on indigenous peoples’ participation in IFAD-funded projects**

IFAD conducted a survey in 2012 to assess the degree of participation of indigenous peoples’ organizations in the design and implementation of IFAD-funded projects. It will also serve as an information baseline for assessing changes in their participation. The survey covered 39 projects formulated specifically for indigenous peoples or including indigenous peoples as part of their target groups.

The survey found that in 82 per cent of those projects indigenous peoples’ organizations participated in design and/or implementation. Most of the projects that involved indigenous peoples’ organizations in design also involved them in implementation. In 18 per cent of the projects indigenous peoples’ organizations had specific responsibilities as implementation partners. In 17 per cent they served on steering committees and participated in monitoring and evaluation.

**Case studies on IFAD-supported projects**

In preparation for the first global meeting of the Forum, independent studies were commissioned on IFAD-funded projects involving indigenous peoples in each region. The objectives were to identify good practices and innovations with potential for replication; monitor implementation of the Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples; identify challenges and suggest areas of improvement to strengthen partnerships between IFAD and indigenous peoples; and identify policies and institutions to facilitate replication and scaling up as well as any necessary changes. The case studies were conducted by indigenous peoples and reported on at the first global meeting of the Forum.

Good practices identified in the three case studies in Asia included better participatory planning thanks to strengthened traditional institutions and governance systems at the village level; more participation by women in decision-making; more use of appropriate technologies such as land contour improvements; greater use of self-help groups among farmers, producers and women; opening of new livelihood opportunities and improved market access, increasing income and food security; and better access to mother-tongue education, health services and clean water.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the case studies found that the good practices identified related to gender aspects and that indigenous women have been empowered and strengthened by the projects’ activities; balance between traditional and new knowledge; respect for the governance institutions of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants; and agro-industrial decentralization, whereby the agro-industrial development has reached down to the community level.

**Regional recommendations**

Representatives from the three regions met with their counterparts, including regional directors, during the global meeting. One of their tasks was to develop recommendations for the two-year period before the next meeting. All three groups called for more government recognition of indigenous peoples, more participation by indigenous peoples in IFAD-supported projects, more support for capacity-building and more sharing of information. Summaries of additional priorities from each region are provided below.

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1 The reports of the regional workshops are available online at [http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/forum/index.htm](http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/forum/index.htm).
Africa

- IFAD should provide more funds for indigenous peoples’ organizations through the Indigenous Peoples’ Assistance Facility.
- Work with indigenous peoples in Africa should support inter-community dialogue with other vulnerable groups that may feel excluded.
- IFAD will ensure that gender considerations are taken into account in activities involving indigenous peoples.
- IFAD should play a role in enhancing policy dialogue at national and regional levels, advocating for universally recognized rights.
- IFAD should support reforms around land tenure and land use planning.
- IFAD should seek partnerships with other United Nations agencies and establish joint platforms to promote indigenous peoples’ rights.
- Consultations with indigenous peoples should take place in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way and key documents should be translated into languages understood by indigenous peoples.

Asia and the Pacific

- IFAD will work to improve its consultation mechanism so that indigenous peoples are included in projects that will have a direct effect on them.
- IFAD will translate a summary of the policy on indigenous peoples and other important IFAD policies into the top five languages of the region for wider dissemination.
- Indicators should be developed for indigenous peoples, which could be piloted in selected IFAD-supported projects from the current pipeline.
- Indigenous peoples’ representatives will be invited to participate in regional IFAD knowledge-sharing events, and IFAD staff should participate in similar indigenous peoples’ activities.
- IFAD should promote the indigenous peoples’ agenda in forums organized by governments.
- IFAD should include questions related to indigenous peoples in baseline surveys conducted at the beginning of investment projects to allow monitoring of results and impact.
- Indigenous peoples should use the IFAD grievance mechanism to voice and address concerns about IFAD-supported projects.

Latin America and the Caribbean

- Indigenous leaders should be included in consultations in areas where IFAD is developing projects and should participate in round tables organized in the framework of country assessments.
- IFAD should work to develop ethnically disaggregated data and incorporate cultural indicators into monitoring and evaluation systems.
- IFAD should coordinate development of a standardized global protocol to implement free, prior and informed consent.
- IFAD should promote the inclusion of indigenous, Afro-descendant communities and other historically excluded sectors in dialogue with governments.
- The inclusion of indigenous peoples should be promoted in activities cofinanced by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the IFAD Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme.
- In preparing for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014, IFAD should nurture dialogue between the organizations participating in the Forum and IFAD regional divisions, and the regional divisions should play an instrumental role in the preparatory meeting in Mexico.
Synthesis of deliberations: First global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD, 11-12 February 2013

We, the indigenous peoples of Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, still conserve our diverse identities, cultures and spiritual traditions. The ecosystems within our territories are still relatively intact, and we continue to be the custodians of biodiversity. Our diverse knowledge systems and livelihood practices have the potential to contribute to and inspire new models of sustainable development, building on culture and identity, firmly anchored in respect for our individual and collective rights.

In the midst of economic, environmental and cultural crises, it appears to us that current development processes have not delivered the promised goals of poverty reduction and sustainable development. Evidence shows that indigenous peoples are overrepresented among the poor, are often excluded from poverty reduction efforts and still suffer from discrimination. We are ready to continue contributing and participating, to work in a mutually beneficial partnership with IFAD to reach the ambitious goal of reducing rural poverty, recalling that there can be no sustainable rural development without – or at the expense of – indigenous peoples.

We sincerely appreciate the serious efforts of IFAD to establish a strategic partnership with indigenous peoples. It has reached a higher ground with the establishment of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum. We see this as a good practice for intergovernmental institutions and a key step in the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which establishes a universal minimum standard for survival, dignity and well-being of our peoples. The Forum institutionalizes our relationship with IFAD and establishes a shared learning environment, based on the principles of consultation, participation and dialogue. It will also help in facilitating implementation of the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples. The dedicated funds of the Indigenous Peoples’ Assistance Facility have increased IFAD’s engagement with indigenous peoples as a specific target group.

Our collaboration so far has generated valuable experiences, lessons learned and good practices, but also revealed challenges. Some states still do not adequately recognize indigenous peoples in national legislation and policies. IFAD’s policy and the provisions on free, prior and informed consent have not been systematically applied. These are identified as major obstacles to having our issues adequately reflected in IFAD country strategies and programmes. At the project level, a survey has shown an encouraging number of projects involving indigenous peoples during design, but significantly weaker participation in implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

We therefore put forward the following recommendations to consolidate our partnership and strengthen the systematic implementation of IFAD’s Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples:

For governments, IFAD and indigenous peoples jointly agree to:

• Firmly link the global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum with follow-up mechanisms at regional, national and project levels, for effective tripartite dialogue on the inclusion of indigenous peoples’ needs and priorities in country strategies and IFAD-funded projects.
• Document, exchange, share, replicate and scale up good practices with regard to indigenous peoples’ self-determined sustainable development.

Particularly, we call upon governments to:

• Recognize indigenous peoples’ rights to land, territories and resources, including rangelands and corridors, and the contributions of traditional knowledge systems, technologies and livelihoods for ecosystem resilience and sustainable development.
• Build the capacity of government institutions to address indigenous peoples' needs and priorities, by providing training to staff and employing indigenous experts within their institutions.

• Respect, protect and fulfil the rights of indigenous peoples as stated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and acknowledge the role of indigenous traditional institutions, authorities and organizations.

We call upon IFAD to:

• Increase its capacity on indigenous peoples' issues, including by providing training to staff, furthering the employment of indigenous experts and, when possible, appointing focal points at country level.

• Ensure full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, including in the formulation of country strategies and throughout the project cycle.

• Implement effectively its Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples in working with projects targeting or affecting indigenous peoples, including by systematically encouraging borrowing governments to consult with indigenous peoples to obtain their free, prior and informed consent. IFAD should consider this consultation and consent as a criterion for project approval, as stated in the policy.

• Increase direct funding to indigenous peoples' organizations and institutions, including to the Indigenous Peoples' Assistance Facility.

• Acknowledge and value indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, technologies and environmental services in conservation and sustainable use of their ecosystems, as in-kind contributions to projects.

• Inform and involve indigenous peoples in supervision missions and evaluation.

• Identify and operationalize, in collaboration with indigenous peoples, specific indicators on the well-being of indigenous peoples.

• Devise measures for affirmative action targeting indigenous peoples, particularly women and young people.

• Use the Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples as a platform for policy dialogue at country level with governments and other development partners.

• Ensure that during project formulation in-country, and within the design of projects, communication and information provisions for indigenous peoples are appropriately provided.

• Continue support to the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

• Support and undertake joint advocacy with indigenous peoples on their issues and concerns in the post-2015 development agenda.

Our commitment as indigenous peoples' organizations is to:

• Continue to defend and sustain our land, territories and resources as the basis for our sustainable livelihoods and development, and as our contribution towards global environmental sustainability.

• Report back to our communities and organizations on the outcomes of this first global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum and continue the dialogue and our partnership at all levels.

• Work jointly with IFAD and governments to design and elaborate economically viable, culturally appropriate and ecologically sound sustainable development models for our peoples.

• Advise and influence governments to adopt and implement public policies oriented towards promoting indigenous peoples' self-determined sustainable development.
Next steps

In responding to the synthesis of deliberations of the Forum, IFAD senior management applauded the participants for the results and highlighted the reciprocity of the partnership between indigenous peoples and IFAD. They noted that the recommendations are reasonable and achievable and that IFAD is exploring ways to support indigenous peoples in the processes leading to the World Conference. At country level, initiatives are under way to improve consultation with indigenous peoples in the design of country strategies and projects, for instance in Guatemala and Mexico. IFAD’s response to the Forum recommendations on enhancing implementation of the Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples will be closely monitored with the support of the Steering Committee of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum.