The Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility

A promising new link between grass-roots indigenous peoples’ organizations and the international community
Indigenous peoples face complex challenges

Indigenous and tribal peoples and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented among the rural poor. Many of the poorest communities of indigenous peoples are difficult to reach through mainstream development programmes. Several recent studies show that the poverty gap between indigenous peoples and other rural populations is increasing in some parts of the world. In addition, indigenous peoples generally score lower on the Human Development Index – the measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standard of living for countries worldwide. This is particularly true for indigenous women.

Indigenous peoples are often disempowered by a lack of recognition of their cultural and socio-political systems. This undermines their social capital and their ability to shape their future. Indigenous peoples have ancestral bonds with their land, territories and natural resources, which are also the basis of their livelihoods. But they are frequently threatened by encroachment, dispossession and lack of respect for and protection of their rights.

In many cases, socio-economic changes and official policies have weakened their governance institutions, especially those responsible for natural resource management. Indigenous peoples are often at a disadvantage in capturing market opportunities. These factors of poverty affect both men and women, but women are often most vulnerable to poverty, disempowerment and exploitation.

Building on the strength and values of indigenous peoples is about expanding their opportunities to pursue developmental goals that they themselves value, both collectively and as individuals, and to continue to play their roles as stewards of biodiversity and holders of unique cultural heritages. Listening to indigenous peoples, both women and men, and involving them in making decisions about their future, are key elements of an effective response.
IFAD’s support for indigenous peoples and their communities

For more than 30 years, IFAD has supported programmes and projects that benefit indigenous peoples, thanks to its targeted approach to rural development. Since 2003, around 20 per cent of IFAD’s funded projects have supported initiatives for indigenous peoples, mainly in Asia and Latin America.

IFAD believes that indigenous peoples should be free from marginalization and be able to lead the kind of life they value. Much of IFAD’s support to indigenous peoples has been directed at developing their livelihoods and strengthening their institutions, as well as empowering them to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

In September 2009, IFAD’s Executive Board approved the Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples. It aims to enhance IFAD’s development effectiveness with indigenous peoples’ communities in rural areas, and especially to empower them to overcome poverty by building upon their identity and culture.

This new policy sets out nine principles of engagement that IFAD applies in its work with indigenous peoples, including “free, prior and informed consent”. These principles are consistent with international standards, in particular with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues.

Over the years, IFAD has learned that capacity-building and self-determined development can be considerably improved by entrusting indigenous communities with the direct management of resources and funds.

The Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility

In 2006, IFAD’s Executive Board approved the transfer to IFAD of a dedicated Facility established in 2003 by the World Bank. This was in recognition of IFAD’s experience and knowledge of indigenous peoples’ issues. The objective of the Facility is to build a direct partnership with indigenous peoples to enable them and their communities to design, approve and implement grass-roots development projects based on their own perspectives. The Facility is now called the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF).

IPAF is an innovative funding instrument that indigenous communities can use to find their own solutions to the challenges they face. It supports the aspirations of indigenous peoples by funding small projects that build on their culture, identity, knowledge, natural resources, intellectual property and human rights.

Through small grants of up to US$50,000, IPAF supports projects that:

- include indigenous peoples in development operations
- improve their access to key decision-making processes
- empower them to find solutions to the challenges they face
- promote collaboration in the public and private spheres.

In September 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This historic achievement validates the struggle of indigenous peoples worldwide for human rights and equality. It provides them with an international instrument to better preserve their cultures and heritage, and to strengthen their ability to shape and direct their own destinies, both collectively and as individuals.
Governance and administration
IPAF is governed by a board made up of:
- four members of indigenous peoples’ institutions from Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and South-East Asia
- one member from UNPFII
- one member from IFAD.

The board works closely with the Indigenous Peoples’ Desk at IFAD, responsible for administrative, technical and financial issues.

How grants are awarded
To be considered for funding, local organizations must design their own projects and submit them to IPAF.

All project proposals are reviewed through a rigorous and competitive process. Funds are awarded based on the criteria of project effectiveness and feasibility, and institutions’ capacity and credibility. Following approval of IFAD’s Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, a new criterion has been introduced to assess to what extent proposed projects adhere to the principles of development with culture and identity for indigenous peoples. The IPAF board ensures that the grant portfolio is balanced in terms of geography, gender and sector.

In response to IFAD’s four calls for proposals, in 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2015, indigenous communities and organizations in 90 countries submitted more than 3,500 applications. In all, 127 projects were financed in some 45 countries worldwide for a total amount of about US$3.6 million. The projects aimed to:
- enrich livelihoods by improving sustainable agricultural practices, developing new off-farm enterprises and enhancing market access
- manage natural resources, including community-based forestry, and protect biodiversity
- build capacity to revitalize cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and indigenous peoples’ rights
- map indigenous and tribal peoples’ territories and cultures
- empower women
- protect and patent intellectual property rights
- develop culturally appropriate initiatives and ethno-tourism models
- collect data on indigenous and tribal populations
- improve health services by integrating traditional knowledge systems
- boost disaster and climate change risk management based on traditional knowledge and practices
- strengthen the participation of indigenous and tribal peoples in policy formulation.

For example, the 2011 project “Reclaiming the Commons with Women’s Power: Eco-village development in Tribal Odisha” (India) aimed to develop two eco-villages combining indigenous peoples’ resources with development of agro-ecological models to check the rate of deforestation and provide food, livelihood and energy security.

The project “Strengthening Indigenous Justice Under a Gender Perspective” (Colombia) instead sought to strengthen the indigenous communities’ own justice system, especially in relation to violence against women.

Experiences of IPAF projects have been shared during the first and second global meetings of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD, held in Rome respectively in February 2013 and 2015. The Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD is a concrete attempt to institutionalize a process of consultation and dialogue with indigenous peoples’ representatives. The Forum was established during a workshop in Rome (17-18 February 2011), which gathered together 28 representatives of indigenous peoples’ organizations and members from the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

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The project “Enhancing the Territories/Traditional Lands of Indigenous Peoples Through Community Forestry at Walikale” (Democratic Republic of the Congo) focused on the creation of local communities’ forests groups that provided a significant foundation for land tenure security in indigenous territories, thus promoting access to natural resources and addressing climate change.

A unique partnership and its potential
Although the Facility and the grants it provides are small, they have a great potential to bridge grass-roots indigenous peoples’ organizations with the international indigenous peoples’ movement and with the UNPFII.

In this regard, a new strategy for the Facility was developed in 2010. Its aim is to empower indigenous peoples’ organizations to manage IPAF at the regional level and to strengthen networking among indigenous peoples’ communities and organizations at the local, regional and global level.

In 2011, the management of the Facility was decentralized at the regional level, with the support of three indigenous peoples’ organizations, namely Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI) in Latin America and the Caribbean; Tebtebba Foundation in Asia; and Mainyoito Pastoralist Integrated Development Organization (MPIDO) in Africa, which has been replaced by the Kivulini Trust for the 2015 call for proposals. As co-managers of IPAF, these partner organizations are responsible for:

- monitoring and supervising IPAF-funded projects
- strengthening the link between IPAF small projects and IFAD-funded country programmes
- documenting and disseminating knowledge generated by IPAF
- supporting IPAF resource mobilization.

These links create a unique and promising partnership that has the potential to further strengthen indigenous peoples’ roles and advancement in their communities and countries, as well as on the world stage.

In early 2014, a questionnaire to measure the success of the decentralization was sent to the grass-roots organizations that had implemented the small IPAF projects. The performance of the three IPAF partners resulted satisfactory in 85 per cent of the cases.

The improved performance of the grass-roots organizations, compared to previous IPAF cycles, was a reflection of the positive involvement of the IPAF co-management partners. More detailed project designs and adjustments during the implementation phase improved project relevance (90 per cent satisfactory), due to the support provided by the three regional partners and a decentralized and more accurate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system set up at the regional level. The improvement in operational capacity (80 per cent satisfactory) was also due to decentralization, which allowed for a more tailored technical assistance by the three regional organizations during both the design and implementation phases.

The UNPFII is an advisory body to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.

The challenges and development solutions presented by indigenous peoples and their organizations in their grant proposals provide a wealth of information. By drawing on this information, IFAD will be able to improve the programmes and projects it supports.

To date, IPAF and its related activities have been funded by IFAD, the World Bank and the Governments of Canada, Finland, Italy and Norway. While the Facility is being mainstreamed through IFAD’s budget, more resources will be needed to meet the demands of indigenous peoples’ communities and organizations to support the solutions they develop to meet the challenges they face.
IPAF-funded projects: key findings

The experience of the three IPAF cycles has been captured in reports that analyse the performance of the small projects. *Learning by Working Together, Microprojects financed through the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility and IPAF Small projects Desk Reviews*. The assessments, based on qualitative and quantitative analysis, confirms that the beneficiary communities are extremely poor and difficult to reach. Most of the people reached by the small projects are young people and women. The reports also confirm that extending funding directly to indigenous peoples’ communities and their organizations is effective in supporting self-driven development. Small amounts for small communities can make a big difference, particularly in building capacities and strengthening institutions and organizations. Another finding is the high degree of “ownership” beneficiary communities and implementing organizations feel towards the projects.

IPAF’s activities and outputs at a glance

Three reviews conducted by independent consultants on the performance of IPAF-funded projects provided an overview of the performance of 84 small projects, implemented between 2007 and 2014, in delivering results and improving the lives of their communities. Findings of the review showed that:

- About 75,000 people directly benefited from 102 small projects financed through IPAF. More than half were women.
- Training and individual capacity-building were the primary activities, followed by building and strengthening local institutions and creating and raising the value of physical assets, infrastructure and equipment (see chart 1).
- More than 40,000 people benefited from trainings and capacity-building on priorities they set: security of tenure, natural resource management, climate change coping strategies, agricultural technologies, business and management, traditional medicine, indigenous peoples’ rights, community programming and literacy (40 per cent of them were women).

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1 English: Learning by Working Together, Microprojects financed through the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (2008); IPAF small projects Desk review (2011 and 2015); https://www.ifad.org/topic/ipaf/overview/tags/indigenous_peoples
Through activities aimed at building and strengthening local institutions, about 500 groups were strengthened and created. These included self-help groups, microenterprises, marketing groups, community programming groups and common property resources groups. More than half of these groups were headed by women. About 400 individuals participated in the groups, and over half of them were women. These groups focused on:

- improving livelihoods and economic development
- gaining access to land and improving security of tenure
- setting up rural microfinancial services
- documenting, protecting, restoring and applying traditional knowledge and systems, traditional language and ancestral cults.

The IPAF activities improved livelihoods and economic development. Activities also promoted collective empowerment; land and natural resource management; documenting; and protecting and restoring traditional knowledge, culture and identity (see chart 2).

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**Chart 1**
Distribution of activities of IPAF’s small projects

- Training and individual capacity-building: 45%
- Building and strengthening local institutions: 24%
- Creation of physical assets, infrastructures and equipment: 15%
- Soil and water conservation: 7%
- Knowledge management: 4%
- Setting up of financial services: 3%
- Animal distribution and veterinary services: 2%

**Chart 2**
Distribution of results of IPAF’s small projects by domain

- Improvement of livelihoods and economic development: 35%
- Collective empowerment: 23%
- Land and natural resource management: 21%
- Traditional knowledge, culture and identity: 18%
- Health: 3%
Improvement of livelihoods and economic development. Small projects focused mainly on increasing agricultural production and access to markets, improving management of natural resources and increasing off-farm activities. About 13,000 individuals, half of them women, were trained in natural resource management, crop production practices, livestock production techniques and technologies, infrastructure management, post-production processing and marketing, financial management and income-generating activities.

Ten microenterprises were established. Thirty natural resource management groups were formed or strengthened, along with 170 saving and credit groups, 25 marketing and processing groups and 12 crop and livestock production groups.

Collective empowerment. Efforts have been made to increase indigenous peoples’ awareness of their rights at the national and international level, and to strengthen traditional governance structures. In particular, about 13,000 individuals were trained in policymaking and community management, one third of them women. These two aspects go hand in hand to empower indigenous communities. They are fundamental in ascertaining rights and fighting against encroachment and dispossession of land and territories.

Traditional knowledge, culture and identity. More than 20 per cent of the activities in the small projects attained results in documenting, protecting and restoring traditional knowledge, culture and identity. Several projects revitalized traditional agricultural systems and handicraft techniques to help people improve their livelihoods or health. The relevance of the activities in meeting peoples’ needs was judged highly satisfactory, inasmuch as livelihood improvement activities produce important outputs and preserve traditional knowledge.

Land and natural resource management. The focus of small projects on land and natural resource management has increased since the first IPAF call for proposal in 2007. In the third IPAF round, almost 15 per cent of projects addressed issues linked to the management of land and water, mainly through capacity-building initiatives: more than 6,000 people were trained in relevant topics, 45 per cent of whom were women.
2015 fourth IPAF call for proposals

The fourth IPAF call for proposals was launched in January 2015 with the aim to foster indigenous peoples’ self-driven development, within the framework of the UNDRIP, by strengthening their communities and organizations. Out of the 540 proposals received from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, the IPAF board approved 25 small projects (ranging from US$20,000 to US$50,000) lasting up to two years. The small projects will be implemented by indigenous peoples’ communities and their organizations in 23 countries with the support of IPAF co-managers at the regional level: FIMI in Latin America and the Caribbean; Tebtebba Foundation in Asia; and Kivulini Trust in Africa.

Many projects focus on the promotion and preservation of traditional indigenous peoples’ food systems. These are unique food systems that build on traditional knowledge and sustainable livelihood practices, and which are adapted to the specific ecosystems of the territories where indigenous peoples live. These practices include small-scale farming, pastoralism, shifting cultivation, fishing, hunting and gathering. Over generations, these livelihoods have ensured the food sovereignty and well-being of indigenous peoples’ communities, and are intimately linked to the identities, cultures, spirituality, education and governance systems, as highlighted by representatives of indigenous peoples during the second global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD.

Diversity of peoples corresponds to cultural diversity, to biodiversity and diversity of crops and knowledge systems. These are the assets the majority of the IPAF-funded projects are building upon, with a view to not only preserving indigenous peoples’ food systems, but to accessing the market and generating income to improve the lives of their own communities.

Other projects focus on securing land rights of indigenous peoples’ communities. In the Philippines, for example, the project aims to empower 17 indigenous peoples’ communities to secure legal recognition of their communities’ ancestral domains through certificates of ancestral domain title (CADT) and to formulate an ancestral domain sustainable development and protection plan (ADSDPP) for approximately 200,000 hectares of ancestral land and water, directly benefiting some 4,250 people.

Climate change is the focus of a project being implemented in Colombia. The project has an innovative approach to link the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples to research centres. It identifies five different ways for indigenous peoples’ communities to adapt to climate change to avoid loss in food production and build their capacity, while continuing to produce their own food and make water available.

Indigenous women play a fundamental role as agents of change and stewards of natural resources and biodiversity in all the fourth cycle IPAF-funded projects. Indigenous women pass their rich knowledge to the next generations. Fifty per cent of all activities of IPAF-funded projects include women’s participation and several organizations led by women. About 30 per cent of IPAF-funded projects focus specifically on women’s empowerment.
### List of IPAF-funded projects approved in 2015

#### Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Project title</th>
<th>Approved amount USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>Community Connections Botswana</td>
<td>Promotion and documentation of preservation of traditional Ikangala foods using indigenous knowledge</td>
<td>48 200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Centre for Support to Women and Rural People (CAFER)</td>
<td>Improving the livelihoods of Bedzang Pygmy populations in the Tikar plain</td>
<td>48 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>Kivu Indigenous Peoples Collective (CPAKI)</td>
<td>Empowerment of Kalonge and Bunyakiri indigenous households with beekeeping in South Kivu province</td>
<td>37 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>DERE Integrated Development Action</td>
<td>Improving the livelihoods of the women of South-West Ethiopia who depend on the enset crop</td>
<td>35 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Voice of the Amazigh Women (IMSLI)</td>
<td>Economic integration of indigenous women in Morocco – support for commercialization of local terroir products</td>
<td>48 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>OSEPOCCA-NGO</td>
<td>Title Improving food security and nutrition for Batwa/Pygmies in Rutsiro district with small livestock, kitchen gardening and mushroom growing</td>
<td>46 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Ujamaa Resource Community Team (URCT)</td>
<td>Securing land and natural resources for the Hadzabe of northern Tanzania</td>
<td>48 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC)</td>
<td>Building capacity of the Batwa Pygmies for sustainable income-generating enterprises using a cultural values approach</td>
<td>39 000</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>350 000</strong></td>
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#### Asia and the Pacific Region

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Project title</th>
<th>Approved amount USD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>The Cultural and Development Society (CDS)</td>
<td>Preservation and promotion of varieties of traditional crops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization</td>
<td>Build and strengthen the capacity, and raise awareness of indigenous peoples’ rights to land and territories</td>
<td>45 248</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Surul Centre for Services in Rural Areas</td>
<td>Revamping livelihood of Santhal Tribe through the WADI approach</td>
<td>40 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>AMAN-Kalimantan Barat</td>
<td>Strengthening indigenous Dayak Jawatn communities’ capacity (especially indigenous women) in three villages to manage their indigenous forest/territory sustainably</td>
<td>40 067</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Foundation for Community Studies and Development (Yayasan Kajian &amp; Pembangunan Masyarakat; YKPM)</td>
<td>Enhance Ulu Gurnum Jakun Orang Asli livelihoods through diversity, social enterprise and sustainable agriculture</td>
<td>40 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Sukhi Development Foundation</td>
<td>Empowering Bakarwals: Income generation through propagation and marketing of medicinal plants in the Neelam Valley of Azad Jammu Kashmir, Pakistan</td>
<td>41 400</td>
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### Asia and the Pacific Region

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<th>Project title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Malayang Samahan ng mga Katutubo ng Antipolo City (MASAKA Inc.)</td>
<td>Promoting organic agriculture within the Dumagat community (Pro-Agrí)</td>
<td>20 000</td>
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<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Nagkakaisang mga Tribu ng Palawan (NATRIPAL Inc.)</td>
<td>NATRIPAL CADT and Advocacy Project</td>
<td>39 935</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Inter Mountain Peoples’ Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPACT)</td>
<td>Strengthening the Highland Environmental Management Network and ensuring land, natural resources and food security for six indigenous communities in northern Thailand</td>
<td>43 350</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>350 000</td>
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### Latin America and the Caribbean

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<th>Organization</th>
<th>Project title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Asociación para el Futuro con manos de Mujer [Women's hands for the future] (ASFUMUJER)</td>
<td>Renacer – Climate change adaptation and food security for indigenous communities in Natagaima Tolima</td>
<td>40 000</td>
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<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Indigenous Traditional Authorities of Colombia Governing Body</td>
<td>Indigenous women weaving life, knowledge and territory</td>
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<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Centro Lianas Foundation</td>
<td>Amazon women farming native fish for food security and commercialization</td>
<td>40 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Association for the Recovery of Indigenous Culture of El Salvador (ARCAS)</td>
<td>Creating and strengthening indigenous peoples capacities for ancestral knowledge and raising awareness of their rights</td>
<td>44 700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Federation of Associations and Communities for Comprehensive Development of the Ch’orti’ Region (COMUNICACH)</td>
<td>Strategic plan for water and soil conservation in territories restored by the government to Maya Ch’orti’ indigenous communities in the municipality of La Union, Zacapa</td>
<td>50 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>CIARENA A.C. – Conservation, Research and Development of Natural Resources</td>
<td>Promoting and strengthening food security with integrated kitchen garden and backyard livestock farming by Mixe, Chinanteca and Zapoteca women using knowledge from indigenous peoples</td>
<td>49 926</td>
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<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Li Lamni Tasbaika Kum Indigenous Territorial Government (STI-LT)</td>
<td>Establishment, production, collection, processing and commercialization of cacao in Li Lamni Tasbaika Kum indigenous territory, municipality of Waspam, Rio Coco, Northern Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN)</td>
<td>50 000</td>
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<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>Yvy Porâ Foundation</td>
<td>Honey production and commercialization by Fischat women</td>
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<td></td>
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Links
Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility
IFAD’s Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples
United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues