INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ FORUM

In conjunction with the Thirty-sixth Session of IFAD’s Governing Council

11-12 February 2013
Indigenous Peoples’ Forum – First Global Meeting

The Indigenous Peoples’ Forum, the culmination of 35 years of IFAD engagement with indigenous peoples, will have its first global meeting on 11-12 February 2013 at IFAD headquarters in Rome.

The Forum 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 People (2007). The Forum also reflects IFAD’s long experience in empowering poor rural communities and its participatory approach to grass-roots rural development.

Background

The Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples envisaged the Forum as a concrete way to institutionalize consultation and dialogue with indigenous people, “with the aim of improving 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 UN 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 UN 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. The road map also called for the preparation of case studies on IFAD-funded projects by indigenous people.
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. The survey 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 people and will be reported on at the first global meeting of the Forum.

Regional workshops

Regional workshops were held in 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand, Managua, Nicaragua, and Nairobi, Kenya. Their purpose was to ensure that the Forum represents the diversity of indigenous peoples from Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa, and to gather the perspectives and recommendations from indigenous peoples’ organizations in each region.

Participants in the workshops commended IFAD’s strong engagement with indigenous peoples. They noted IFAD’s recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights, respect for traditional practices and knowledge, and sensitivity to key issues such as gender equality and environmental stewardship. They also expressed appreciation for the Indigenous Peoples’ Assistance Facility, which since 2007 has financed 102 small projects submitted by indigenous peoples’ communities. At each regional workshop, participants identified challenges and recommendations for enhancing IFAD’s development effectiveness in its engagement with indigenous peoples.

Africa
Participants: 40 people from 20 countries
The participants in this workshop applauded IFAD’s growing engagement with indigenous peoples in Africa and expressed appreciation for the Indigenous Peoples’ Assistance Facility. They commended good practices such as support for agricultural projects compatible with environmental protection, balanced gender participation in project financing, and support for projects to secure traditional lands and develop traditional practices and knowledge. They underscored that IFAD projects should do no harm to indigenous peoples’ social and cultural rights and environments.

Selected recommendations:
• Strengthen and promote free, prior and informed consent in IFAD-funded projects to safeguard indigenous peoples’ rights.
• Influence land tenure reforms to take into account the needs of indigenous peoples.
• Increase participation of indigenous peoples’ representatives in IFAD-funded projects implemented by governments that are undertaken on indigenous peoples’ lands and territories.
• Establish a framework for policy dialogue and exchange between IFAD, indigenous peoples and governments.
• Train indigenous people in practical agricultural development skills.

Asia and the Pacific
Participants: 74 people from 12 countries
IFAD was commended for its policy of engagement with indigenous peoples by participants in this workshop. Among other good practices they applauded were IFAD’s success in making indigenous peoples more visible and its efforts to ensure recognition of their rights and to establish links...
between indigenous peoples and governments. Participants from the Pacific and Mekong subregions appreciated direct funding, which eliminated middlemen; those from Southeast Asia highlighted implementation of free, prior and informed consent and community involvement; and South Asian participants praised partnerships between communities and indigenous peoples’ organizations.

Selected recommendations:
- Establish mechanisms to engage indigenous peoples, IFAD and government at the project and national level.
- Support capacity building and technical support, especially among women and youth.
- Involve indigenous peoples in the monitoring and evaluation of projects with participation by indigenous peoples.
- Evaluate implementation of free, prior and informed consent in projects.
- Explore the possibility of regional mechanisms to access grants for the Indigenous Peoples’ Assistance Facility.
- Support policy dialogue with governments to encourage respect for indigenous peoples as an overarching framework to ensure that projects serve their interests.

Latin America and the Caribbean
Participants: 50 people from 11 countries
Participants in this workshop represented 26 indigenous peoples’ groups. They underscored the importance of recognizing indigenous peoples’ distinctiveness and strengthening their autonomy, and of ensuring that respect for cultural identity underpins IFAD-support projects. The meeting made note of good practices in these projects and called for IFAD to systematize and promote them.

The practices identified included strengthening cultural identity and integrating the gender focus, respect for the forms of organization and governance of indigenous peoples, and maintenance of a balance between traditional and new knowledge.

Selected recommendations:
- Use the methodology of learning routes to systematize and disseminate good practices on traditional knowledge.
- Require inclusion of information about indigenous peoples and their issues in the design of programmes and projects.
- Formulate specific indicators on the well-being of indigenous peoples for use in projects affecting indigenous peoples.
- Increase access to education and vocational training through scholarships, internships and information exchange.
- Raise the ceiling of grants in the Indigenous Peoples’ Assistance Facility and broaden the contribution base to expand its use.
- Disseminate lessons learned from IFAD-funded activities.

Expected outputs of First Global Meeting
- Regional action plans, to be based on regional working group sessions.
- Synthesis of deliberations, to be presented to the Governing Council.
- IFAD management response to the synthesis of deliberations.