

# The Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD

## Regional and subregional consultation meetings 2020

### Concept Note

#### Introduction

IFAD's Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples aims to enhance IFAD's development effectiveness in its engagement with indigenous peoples' communities in rural areas. The policy sets out the principles of engagement that IFAD will adhere to in its work with indigenous peoples, and the instruments, procedures and resources IFAD will deploy to implement these principles.

As a key instrument to implement the policy, the Indigenous Peoples' Forum was established at IFAD in 2011. The Forum is a permanent process of consultation and dialogue between representatives from indigenous peoples' institutions and organizations, IFAD and governments.

It is estimated that there are more than 476 million self-identified Indigenous People in some 90 countries around the world. But far too often they continue to face discrimination and their voices continue to go unheard.

Indigenous Peoples have been dispossessed of their lands, territories and resources over centuries, and as a result, have often lost control over their way of life.

Worldwide, they account for 6 per cent of the population but represent more than 18 per cent of those living in extreme poverty.

IFAD

<https://www.ifad.org/en/indigenous-peoples>

The Forum enables participants to jointly assess IFAD's engagement with indigenous peoples, consult on rural development and poverty reduction, and promote the participation of indigenous peoples' organizations in IFAD's activities at the country, regional and international levels. Overall, these activities help IFAD to implement its policy and translate its principles into action on the ground.

The global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum convenes every other year in conjunction with IFAD's Governing Council, IFAD's main decision-making body. In preparation for each global meeting, regional consultation meetings are organized to ensure that the Forum reflects the diversity of perspectives and recommendations gathered from indigenous peoples in the various regions where IFAD operates; the regional consultations also track the progress made on past agreements.

A unique process within the United Nations system, the Forum institutionalizes IFAD's consultation and dialogue with indigenous peoples' representatives at all levels and provides an opportunity for indigenous peoples and IFAD to further strengthen their collaboration for rural transformation.

#### Past editions of the Forum

At the four previous global meetings, indigenous peoples' representatives called on IFAD to: support initiatives to recognize and protect their rights; value their knowledge; strengthen their participation throughout IFAD's project cycles; and ensure that free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is sought in the context of IFAD-funded projects.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Final reports of past editions of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD can be found here: <https://www.ifad.org/web/guest/indigenous-peoples-forum>

**The fourth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD** took place in Rome in February 2019.

During the Forum, regional action plans were discussed and agreed between IFAD regional divisions and the Forum’s participants. In the Synthesis of Deliberations, Indigenous Peoples of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean valued the progress in the implementation of the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples and the strengthening of partnerships between indigenous peoples and IFAD. The increased participation of indigenous peoples in IFAD’s operations has resulted in improved targeting and enhanced quality in the design and implementation of IFAD’s country strategies and projects.

**The global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD – the culmination of a broader process**

The global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD is the culmination of a broader process that includes regional meetings with Indigenous Peoples.

In preparation for the fourth global meeting of the Forum in 2019, regional consultation meetings took place in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific in order to identify regional recommendations to further strengthen the partnership between IFAD and indigenous peoples.

The fourth global meeting focused on promoting indigenous peoples’ knowledge and innovations for climate resilience and sustainable development.

Among the recommendation made by indigenous representatives to IFAD were:

- Promote and facilitate knowledge-sharing among indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women and youth, with a special focus on the inter-generational transfer of indigenous peoples' knowledge and good practices for addressing climate change and building or strengthening community resilience;
- Support the documentation of indigenous peoples' knowledge, customary laws and innovations related to climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Increase investments, including through grants, to support capacity-building initiatives of indigenous organizations, institutions and communities, with a focus on youth and women;
- Prioritize support to indigenous peoples in securing their lands, territories and resources through demarcation, mapping, legal security, respect for indigenous governance systems and registration of customary land as collectively owned.
- In line with the principle of “leaving no one behind”, address the gaps in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets for indigenous peoples;
- Facilitate policy processes and dialogues at the national and regional levels between indigenous peoples, governments and the United Nations system to develop action plans or other measures that ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples; and
- Guarantee the full, systematic and effective engagement and participation of indigenous peoples in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of IFAD strategies and the projects it funds.

These recommendations are particularly relevant in the context of IFAD’s implementation of its Strategic Framework 2016–2025.

**In line with the 2030 Agenda**, which commits to leave no one behind, **IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016–2025**<sup>2</sup> reaffirms IFAD's commitment to indigenous peoples' self-driven development. The Strategic Framework states that IFAD will proactively support indigenous peoples, as part of its target group, in developing their skills and assets to benefit from emerging economic opportunities, while respecting and enhancing their traditional livelihoods, occupations and knowledge. IFAD's interventions and its targeting of indigenous peoples will be improved by conducting more in-depth sociocultural and vulnerability analyses of different target groups and by integrating specific indicators on their well-being to capture impacts and results.

## Indigenous peoples and the SDGs: four years into implementation

According to the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development, after four years of SDG implementation, indigenous peoples across the globe have not just been left behind but have been pushed further behind. This is demonstrated by the continuing widespread grabbing of indigenous peoples' lands and resources, criminalization, increasing poverty and hunger, loss of livelihood, destruction of cultural heritage, forest degradation, loss of biodiversity, conflicts over resource-use and development, increased violence against indigenous women and girls, and rising inequality among others.



**1 NO POVERTY**  
Indigenous Peoples represent 18% of the world's extreme poor but only 6.2% of the global population.

**2 ZERO HUNGER**  
Hunger has increased among Indigenous Peoples' communities due to land grabbing, climate change, and lockdowns and other restrictions due to COVID-19.

Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sgYstaXffn-4TyH62jF6lwe\\_vXhf5Prj/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sgYstaXffn-4TyH62jF6lwe_vXhf5Prj/view)

Indigenous peoples are one with their natural environment, and their survival and well-being are intrinsically linked to their lands, territories and resources. However, when indigenous peoples take action to protect their rights and defend their lands, territories and resources from destruction and expropriation, they are being criminalized with increasing cases of persecution, extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations. This illustrates the huge gap in the respect, protection and realization of the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples in relation to the implementation of the SDGs. It is contrary to the commitment of States to respect and protect indigenous peoples' rights as imperative to achieving the SDGs.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> IFAD Strategic Framework 2016–2025: <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/edb9b9d4-664e-42dc-a31e-db096e6a71b5>

<sup>3</sup> IPMG Thematic Report for the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development 2020: <https://www.indigenouspeoples-sdg.org/index.php/english/all-resources/ipmg-position-papers-and-publications/ipmg-reports/global-reports/162-ipmg-thematic-report-for-hlpf-2020/file>

The COVID-19 pandemic is teaching the world that progress in the implementation of the SDGs will only be achieved by valuing the collective over the individual and that acceleration to deliver truly sustainable development for all, including indigenous peoples, will only be achieved if effective actions are put in place to ensure that they are not left behind. This will only be possible by building inclusive, peaceful and equal societies that respect human rights and protect everyone without discrimination.

### **Indigenous peoples and IFAD's ongoing reforms**

Through a major decentralization, which is still ongoing, IFAD has increased its field presence at country and subregional levels. Furthermore, IFAD has revised several operational procedures including the Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes and the Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures. IFAD has also recently revised its Targeting Guidelines based on the achievements and lessons learned to date.

The Indigenous People team is part of the Social Inclusion Cluster under the Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division at IFAD. This division provides guidance and support to ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly women, indigenous peoples and rural youth, into IFAD's operations.

In 2015 IFAD's Independent Office of Evaluation also carried out an Evaluation Synthesis on indigenous peoples. The main lessons learned are the following:

- Operationalization of FPIC needs more clarity at corporate level. FPIC is about effective beneficiary participation throughout the project cycle; in this regard, considerable improvements need to be made.
- Geographical targeting approaches have not been in accordance with IFAD's targeting policy and there must be a change to this. Caution is necessary to ensure that primary geographical focus does not diminish the focus on indigenous peoples' specific issues.
- Project designs must be responsive to indigenous peoples' priorities and thus be demand-driven.
- IFAD has the capacity and potential to influence institutions, policies and international processes that address the protection of indigenous peoples.

IFAD is currently in the middle of the negotiations for its 12th Replenishment, during which, at the request of Member States, it is expected to formalize a renewed commitment to indigenous peoples. This will entail the preparation of an updated strategy for indigenous peoples and the approval of a new IFAD grant for the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility, among other initiatives. Both of these deliverables are currently scheduled for approval by IFAD's Executive Board in 2022. In this regard, the regional consultation meetings of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum will be an opportunity to gather views and suggestions which can be incorporated into the forthcoming strategy in order to enhance the impact of IFAD's work with indigenous peoples.

## The fifth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD

The overall theme for the fifth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD will be **“The value of indigenous food systems: resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic”**.

This will also be the theme for the virtual regional and subregional consultations that will be organized in October and November 2020, in preparation for the global meeting scheduled to take place in February 2021.

The focus of the fifth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD – on indigenous peoples' livelihoods and food systems – is an opportunity for indigenous peoples and IFAD staff to capitalize on their experiences and further strengthen their collaboration for IFAD to be able to better address the increased hardships faced by indigenous peoples in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The pandemic has exposed weaknesses and exacerbated disparities in public health and social security systems, leaving indigenous peoples behind in national responses and compounding the wider range of systemic violations they already faced. As the world prepares strategies to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of confinement and reduced economic activity, human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples, must be at the centre of recovery.”

**Francisco Cali Tzay, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

The COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting indigenous peoples, exacerbating underlying structural inequalities and pervasive discrimination. The serious impacts must be specifically addressed in the response to the consequences of the crisis.

COVID-19 has increased existing hardships for indigenous peoples regarding their access to food and safe water and has disrupted their local and traditional economies. Indigenous communities whose land rights are denied or who do not have self-determination on their territories are not able to exercise control over their food production and access to fields, forest or beaches; lockdown has therefore reduced their ability to sustain themselves.

The closure of local markets has prevented the sale and purchase of food and the bartering of first-necessity items and deprived many indigenous families of disposable income.

Communities depending on cash crops have been particularly affected and may lack adequate resources for the next planting season. In many countries of the world, agricultural producers as well as gatherers of small forest products have been unable to sell their goods. Semi-nomadic and pastoral communities have been unable to freely roam in search of grazing lands for their cattle or to sell their animals in markets.

During the lockdown, many indigenous peoples have reportedly been prohibited from performing their traditional subsistence activities such as fishing, farming or entering forests to collect forest products. Many have faced the dilemma of either harvesting their crops, notwithstanding the risk of crippling fines or violence for breaking curfews, or of seeing their harvest fail, which results in a loss of income from cash crops and the threat of famine. For example, police violence was reported against women seeking to sell items in the street or gathering wild produce in the forest.

Alongside the dangerous threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, indigenous peoples are facing a second threat: the targeting of indigenous leaders and activists under cover of the disarray or scaling up of emergency measures.

In response to COVID-19, some countries have introduced or increased the presence of military and police in rural areas, where indigenous peoples live.

The lack of access to communication and information further increases the risk of human rights violations, and of those violations going undetected by monitoring and protection mechanisms and without anyone being held accountable.

“Indigenous Peoples and their unique knowledge are essential to address the COVID-19 outbreak and to build a more sustainable, resilient world as we recover from the pandemic.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic shows us that we need to rethink the way we interact with nature, as well as how we produce and consume food. The continuous use of unsustainable agricultural practices, and the devastation of forests and wildlife, are part of what has brought us into closer contact with the virus that causes COVID-19. Indigenous Peoples have long warned of the consequences of exactly these kinds of practices.”

**IFAD’s President, Gilbert F. Houngbo**

In addition, the lack of disaggregated data relative to indigenous peoples’ experiences with COVID-19 continues to be a great challenge, and it has meant that in most countries indigenous peoples have once again been left behind in prevention and protection measures as well as in care programmes and the provision of other socio-economic support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted that the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in matters that concern them, including in the elaboration of responses to pandemics, is a human right that many States in which indigenous peoples live are still failing to meet.

Nevertheless, indigenous peoples have applied their own solutions to cope with the pandemic. Their lifestyle, food systems culture and connection to their lands have shown a great source of resilience in the face of COVID-19 and State-imposed confinement. They have actively acted, using their own traditional knowledge and practices, such as voluntary isolation and sealing off their territories, as well as their own community preventive care measures in their own languages, all in order to keep their communities alive.

### **Indigenous Peoples’ engagement in the UN Food Systems Summit**

Convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN Food Systems Summit, which will take place in October 2021, will examine issues related to climate, employment and social issues, environment and nutrition through the lens of food systems, aiming to the collective objective of: eliminating hunger, creating more inclusive and healthy food systems and safeguarding the health of our planet.

Food systems of indigenous peoples, who retain connection to long-evolved cultures and patterns of living in local ecosystems, present a treasure of knowledge that contributes to well-being and health, and can benefit all humankind.

FAO

<http://www.fao.org/3/i0370e/i0370e00.htm>



The Summit will be an opportunity to showcase the importance of indigenous food systems, their value in terms of sustainability, equity and food security and their connection with all aspects of their lives: culture, natural resources, energy, economy, politics and families.

In her capacity as a member of the Advisory Council of the Special Envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit, Dr Myrna Cunningham, Chair of the Steering Committee of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD, will collaborate with Member States and other stakeholders, including representatives of indigenous peoples, to establish regional and national consultations.

The subregional, regional and global meetings of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD will provide outstanding opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to discuss how to engage with this important UN initiative and to identify challenges and opportunities to contribute to the summit objectives and outcomes.

### **The regional and subregional consultation meetings (virtual)**

In preparation for the fifth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD, regional and subregional meetings will be organized in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific. The goal is to ensure that indigenous peoples lead their own direct engagement and contribution in the preparation process for the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD.

Within the overall theme of "The value of indigenous food systems: resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic", the objectives of the meetings are to:

- Exchange experiences and good practices on the main theme of the Forum;
- Identify the challenges that indigenous peoples and their livelihoods face during COVID- 19;
- Identify opportunities for strengthening good practices as sustainable solutions, and the corresponding elements for regional strategies to enhance IFAD's support to them;
- Analyse and formulate action-oriented recommendations on the theme of the Forum and draft regional action plans that will guide negotiations between indigenous peoples and development partners and donors (including IFAD staff) during the Forum; and
- Discuss and agreed upon possible contributions from indigenous peoples to the UN Food Systems Summit.

The regional and subregional meetings will also:

- Assess the progress of implementation of the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples adopted in 2009;
- Review the recommendations made at the fourth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD (2019) and assess the progress of the recommendations and regional action plans adopted;
- Prepare the regional participation in the fifth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD; and
- Review the presentation of the candidate proposals for the IFAD Indigenous Peoples Awards.

All regional and subregional consultation meetings will be virtual and will be organized by indigenous organizations – Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC) for Latin America and the Caribbean; Mainyoto Pastoralist Development Organization (MPIDO) for Africa; Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) for Asia; and Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF) for the Pacific – in cooperation with IFAD country offices and IFAD staff. All meetings will take place between early October and mid-November.

Being virtual, the meetings will provide an opportunity to broaden participation and engagement of indigenous peoples. It is estimated that each meeting will enable the participation of between 40 and 100 people.

Participants in the regional and subregional meetings will include:

- Representatives of regional and subregional networks/constituencies of indigenous peoples (to be selected by the members of the Steering Committee of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD in consultation with their regional and subregional networks/constituencies);
- Representatives from IFAD-funded projects in the regions and subregions (to be selected by country programme managers);
- Member(s) of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues;
- Participants selected from IPAF-funded projects;
- Member of IPAF co-management organization at the regional level (FIMI in Latin American and the Caribbean, Samburu Women Trust in Africa, and Tebtebba Foundation in Asia);
- Members of the Steering Committee of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD;
- Selected development partners as observers; and
- IFAD staff.

All participants must be familiar with the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples and be knowledgeable about and/or engaged on the ground with the theme of the fifth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD. Geographical balance must be ensured, as well as the different ecosystems and livelihood systems (pastoralists, fisherfolk, hunters and gatherers). Gender balance and the participation of youth will be ensured.

### **The Indigenous Peoples Awards**

In July 2020, IFAD launched the first call for nominations for the Indigenous Peoples Awards<sup>4</sup>. The aim of the Awards is to recognize the efforts and achievements of development projects that successfully engage with indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities living in rural areas. This initiative was established to promote best practices, share knowledge and lessons learned, and identify opportunities to replicate and scale up results.

The listed candidates of each Award category (Best performing IFAD-funded project; Best performing non-IFAD-funded project; Best performing IPAF-funded project) will give a presentation of their projects at the regional meetings whose participants will have a chance to express their preference. The final winners will be awarded during the global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/news-detail/asset/42006286>.