

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' FORUM

In conjunction with the
Forty-fourth Session of
IFAD's Governing Council

2, 3, 4 and 15 February 2021



The Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD

The [Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD](#) was established in 2011 as a permanent process of consultation and dialogue between representatives of indigenous peoples' institutions and organizations, IFAD and governments. The global meeting of the Forum convenes every second February in conjunction with the Governing Council of IFAD, the Fund's main decision-making body. A series of regional consultations lead up to each global meeting, ensuring that the Forum reflects the diversity of perspectives and recommendations gathered from indigenous peoples around the world.

A unique process within the United Nations system, the Forum aims to improve IFAD's accountability, enhance its development effectiveness and exercise leadership among

Background

At the last global meeting of the Forum, indigenous peoples' representatives called upon IFAD to support initiatives that recognize and protect their rights through a holistic approach; value their knowledge; strengthen their participation in IFAD's project cycles; integrate specific indicators of their well-being into monitoring and evaluation systems; and ensure that free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is sought in IFAD-supported projects. During the 2019 global meeting, it was also recommended that IFAD prioritize support to indigenous peoples in securing their lands, territories and resources, address the gaps in achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) targets for indigenous peoples, increase investments to support capacity-building of indigenous

development organizations. It enables participants to 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 operations at the country, regional and international levels. These activities help IFAD to implement its [Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples](#) and translate the policy's principles into action on the ground.

In 2021, for the first time, the global meeting will take place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall theme for the fifth global meeting of the Forum is "The value of indigenous food systems: resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic".

peoples' organizations and communities, and facilitate policy dialogue at the national level.

These recommendations are particularly relevant in the context of the implementation of the [IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025](#), which – in line with the 2030 Agenda and its principle of leaving no one behind – reaffirms IFAD's commitment to indigenous peoples' self-driven development.

Nonetheless, 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 of indigenous peoples', increasing poverty and hunger, loss of livelihoods and cultural heritage, increased violence against indigenous women and girls, and rising inequality.

The COVID-19 pandemic is further increasing existing vulnerabilities and showing the world that progress in implementing the SDGs can only be achieved by valuing the collective over the individual and that effective action is needed to ensure that [indigenous peoples are not left behind](#).

In 2021, a [United Nations Food Systems Summit](#) will be convened, providing a unique opportunity for global public mobilization and commitments to make food systems inclusive, productive, resilient and sustainable. It will be also an opportunity to showcase the importance of indigenous food systems, their value in terms of sustainability, equity and food security, and their connection with indigenous peoples' culture, natural resources, energy, economy and politics.

It is in this particular context – presenting challenges but also opportunities for change – that the fifth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum will explore new avenues for partnerships between IFAD and indigenous peoples.





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The value of indigenous food systems: resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic poses a grave threat to indigenous peoples around the world and is disproportionately affecting indigenous communities, exacerbating underlying structural inequalities and pervasive discrimination. COVID-19 has in fact increased existing hardships for indigenous peoples in terms of their access to food and safe water and has disrupted their local and traditional economies.

As lockdowns continue in numerous countries, 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, losing their livelihoods and reducing their ability to sustain themselves. The situation of indigenous women, who are often the main providers of food and nutrition for their families, is even more serious.

During the lockdown, many indigenous peoples have reportedly been prohibited from performing their traditional subsistence activities, and many have faced the dilemma of either harvesting their crops, notwithstanding the risk of crippling fines or violence for breaking curfews, or seeing their harvest fail, resulting in a loss of income and the threat of famine.

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

Indigenous peoples are also facing the targeting of leaders and activists under cover of the disarray or the scaling up of emergency measures. The lack of access to communication and information further increases the risk of human rights violations.

In addition, the lack of disaggregated data relative to indigenous peoples' experiences with COVID-19, combined with the absence of adequate social services in indigenous communities, constitutes a great challenge, resulting in indigenous peoples being left behind in prevention and protection measures as well as in care programmes in many countries.

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

As stated by the [President of IFAD](#), indigenous peoples and their unique knowledge are essential to addressing the COVID-19 outbreak. In particular, indigenous peoples from all over the world have unique food systems that are anchored in sustainable livelihood practices and adapted to the specific ecosystems of territories. 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 communities and contributed to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Indigenous food systems thus offer a wealth of knowledge and experience that – if adequately supported – can contribute to the well-being and health of all humankind.

2020 regional and subregional consultation meetings

In late 2020, regional and subregional consultation meetings were held in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific in preparation for the fifth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD. The meetings brought together representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations, institutions and communities; representatives of IFAD-supported projects; members of the [United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#); participants from projects funded under the current cycle of the [Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility](#) and its regional co-managers; IFAD staff; and development partners (as observers). Being virtual, the meetings provided an opportunity to broaden the participation and engagement of indigenous peoples.

Within the thematic focus of the Forum, the objectives of the meetings were to: (i) exchange knowledge, experiences and good practices related to the main theme of the Forum; (ii) identify challenges and opportunities for supporting

indigenous peoples and their livelihoods during COVID-19; (iii) formulate action-oriented recommendations to enhance the impact of IFAD's support to them; (iv) discuss and agree upon possible contributions from indigenous peoples to the United Nations Food Systems Summit.

The meetings also provided an opportunity for participants to assess the progress in implementing the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, and to review the status of implementation of the recommendations of the fourth global meeting and the regional action plans agreed upon with IFAD regional divisions in 2019.

Further, they enabled the selection of the candidate proposals for the [Indigenous Peoples Awards 2021](#) launched by IFAD to recognize the efforts and achievements of development projects that successfully engage with indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities living in rural areas.

Highlights and preliminary recommendations emerging from the regional and subregional consultation meetings

From their different perspectives, participants in the consultation meetings identified a series of issues and recommendations to be further discussed at the 2021 global meeting.

In particular, they drew attention to the challenges faced by indigenous peoples during the COVID-19 pandemic and stressed the importance of supporting indigenous farming, production practices and food systems to contribute to the well-being of indigenous communities.

Participants reiterated the need for IFAD and national governments to enhance the engagement of indigenous peoples at the country level through systematic consultations, the full application of free, prior and informed consent and a commitment to hire indigenous consultants with the appropriate knowledge to engage with indigenous communities in IFAD-supported activities.

Also, strong importance was placed on enhancing knowledge generation and sharing among indigenous peoples and on the need to support policy processes and



dialogues at the national level on issues of relevance for indigenous peoples.

The [main recommendations emerging from the regional and subregional consultation meetings](#) include the following:

- Promote organic production, artisanal fisheries and harvesting, and preserve indigenous peoples' traditional practices in order to ensure the food and nutrition security of indigenous communities. Particularly encourage the engagement and participation of youth and women in these activities.
 - Facilitate the marketing of indigenous products by supporting community-based social enterprises and economic initiatives of indigenous peoples (including eco-tourism), and improving access to market information and infrastructure facilities, and post-harvest technology.
 - Rescue native seeds resistant to diseases and climate change and support the creation of local indigenous seeds banks.
 - Recover and strengthen the production of traditional medicines, seeds, crops and indigenous food with high nutritional potential. Facilitate the distribution of indigenous foods and products in school canteens.
- Promote the generation and sharing of knowledge on indigenous food systems and traditional farming practices through studies and researches, audiovisuals, ICT tools and technologies, exchanges among indigenous peoples, food/culinary fairs and festivals, the documentation of indigenous recipes and traditional medicines. Facilitate intergenerational exchange of knowledge and experiences.
 - Strengthen the capacities of indigenous peoples' organizations, institutions and communities with a focus on youth and women.
 - Support indigenous peoples in accessing and managing lands, territories and natural resources including through policy dialogue and advocacy.
 - Support and facilitate policy processes and dialogue at the national level between indigenous peoples, governments and the United Nations system on issues of relevance for indigenous peoples.

Expected outputs of the fifth global meeting

The discussions and conclusions of the global meeting will guide the partnership between indigenous peoples and IFAD over the biennium 2021-2022. The expected outputs are the following:

- Assessment of the [progress made since the last global meeting in IFAD's partnership with indigenous peoples](#).
- Exchange of knowledge on good practices and challenges in promoting indigenous peoples' food systems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Conferral of the Indigenous Peoples Awards 2021.
- Regional action plans for the 2021-2022 period.
- Synthesis of deliberations to be presented to the IFAD Governing Council.
- IFAD Management's response to the synthesis of deliberations.

Partners

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
Fondo para el Desarrollo de los
Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina
y el Caribe (FILAC)
International Indigenous Women's
Forum (IIWF/FIMI)
Mainyoito Pastoralists Integrated
Development Organisation
(MPIDO)
Partners in Community
Development Fiji (PCDF)
Samburu Women Trust (SWT)
Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples'
International Centre for Policy
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