



# SEVENTH GLOBAL MEETING OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' FORUM AT IFAD

Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination:  
A pathway for food security and sovereignty

10–11 February 2025

## Background

The Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD (IPFI), established in 2011, is a permanent process of consultation and dialogue between representatives of Indigenous Peoples, IFAD and governments. The global meeting of the IPFI convenes every second February in conjunction with the Governing Council of IFAD, the Fund's main decision-making body. A series of regional and subregional consultation meetings lead up to each global meeting, ensuring that perspectives and recommendations from Indigenous Peoples from different regions are reflected.

The IPFI enhances IFAD's accountability, development effectiveness, and leadership among development organizations. It allows participants to assess IFAD's engagement with Indigenous Peoples, consult on rural development and poverty reduction, and promote Indigenous Peoples' involvement in IFAD operations at country, regional and international levels. These activities help implement [IFAD's Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples](#) by translating its principles into actions.

Notable examples of policy implementation include the following initiatives: the [Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility \(IPAF\)](#), cofunded by the Swedish International Development

## Indigenous Peoples' Right to Self-Determination

Indigenous Peoples hold internationally recognized rights through the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#), which includes the inherent right to self-determination. As the first international legal instrument acknowledging this right, UNDRIP empowers Indigenous Peoples to define their political status, pursue economic, social and cultural development, and make decisions about policies affecting their lives, including through free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).

With regards to food security and sovereignty, self-determination enables Indigenous Peoples to strengthen food systems by preserving their food practices, biocultural values, and holistic development approaches.

Deeply connected to their **lands, territories and resources**, Indigenous Peoples rely on sustainable practices tied to specific ecosystems, preserving biodiversity while ensuring food security. Secure land tenure and autonomy over resource management are vital for them to maintain their identity and ensure a stable, diversified food supply in harmony with nature.

The self-determination right of Indigenous Peoples is closely tied to the **preservation, promotion and transmission of their traditional knowledge**. This knowledge, accumulated over centuries, guides sustainable agriculture and food production, promoting biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and resilience to climate change. Indigenous culinary and storage techniques enhance the quality and nutritional value of food, supporting balanced diets essential for optimal health. The role of **Indigenous women** in preserving this knowledge and of **Indigenous youth** in bridging tradition with modern practices is

Cooperation Agency, the Packard Foundation and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; the Indigenous Peoples Livelihoods and Climate Resilience Programme; and the Enhanced Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme, which includes IPFI representation in its advisory committee. Moreover, in 2024 IFAD appointed Indigenous Peoples focal points to strengthen country-level engagement.

The 2025 Forum's overall theme is "**Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination: a pathway for food security and sovereignty**". The previous Forum focused on "Indigenous Peoples' Climate Leadership: Community-based solutions to enhance resilience and biodiversity".

Respecting the right to self-determination is critical for Indigenous Peoples, as it enables them to define their identity, set their own development priorities, and influence decisions that directly affect their lives, including those related to food systems. The seventh IPFI global meeting will explore how exercising this right can strengthen food sovereignty, enhance climate resilience, and support the transmission of traditional knowledge for sustainable food production and biodiversity conservation.

critical in this endeavour.

Self-determination also enables Indigenous Peoples to pursue **economic development** aligned with their cultural values and ecological practices. Their economies, rooted in small-scale farming, hunting, fishing and crafts, reflect principles of solidarity, reciprocity, and balance with nature.

Indigenous **governance systems**, grounded in traditional laws and customs, provide the framework for exercising self-determination, allowing collective decision-making on land use, resource management, and food production in culturally appropriate and sustainable ways. Such governance is essential for them to maintain resilient food systems and adapt to environmental and economic challenges.

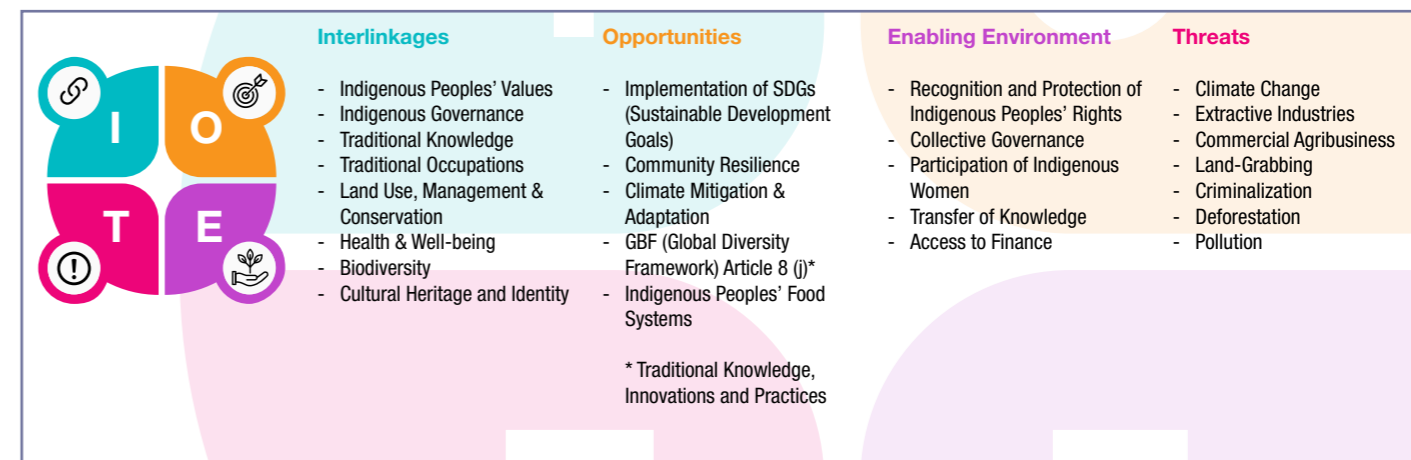
Indigenous Peoples face persistent **challenges** to self-determination, including land dispossession, discrimination, socioeconomic disparities, and the erosion of traditional knowledge and identity. Climate change further threatens their livelihoods and cultures. Efforts to assert their rights often result in violence and displacement. These barriers undermine food security, sovereignty and the ability to address global challenges like poverty and environmental sustainability.

IFAD supports Indigenous Peoples' self-determined development in line with UNDRIP and the 2030 Agenda by prioritizing their culture, knowledge and identity. Over the years, the governance and implementation of the IPAF have set an example of best practices in self-driven development. The 2022 update of IFAD's Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples emphasizes working as equal partners, ensuring their meaningful participation in IFAD's operations, and applying

FPIC. It also includes a new principle of engagement on food sovereignty, food security and nutrition. Nevertheless, further efforts are needed to strengthen Indigenous Peoples' right to

self-determination in IFAD operations from the country to the regional and global levels.

Figure 1: Key Dimensions of Indigenous Peoples' Food Sovereignty



Source: Joan Carling

## 2024 Regional and Subregional Consultation Meetings

As part of the preparatory process of the seventh IPFI global meeting, 12 [regional and subregional consultation meetings](#) were held in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific. The sessions brought together over 450 participants from more than 70 countries, including representatives from Indigenous Peoples' organizations (IPOs) and communities, partners implementing the IPAF small grants, participants from IFAD-funded projects, and representatives from IFAD, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, government representatives and development partners. The objectives of the sessions were to: (i) exchange experiences and good practices on the main theme of the Forum; (ii) share knowledge and evidence on Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination and how this right is exercised to enhance food security and

sovereignty; (iii) identify opportunities for strengthening good practices and finding sustainable solutions to the challenges that Indigenous Peoples face in the recognition and exercise of their right to self-determination; (iv) allow for communication and advocacy on Indigenous Peoples right to self-determination; and (v) analyse and formulate action-oriented recommendations on the theme of the Forum. Additionally, during the sessions, participants to the IPFI global meeting were selected. IFAD updated Indigenous Peoples' representatives on its ongoing work in implementing its Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, engaged with them in dialogue and reflection on the lessons learned, and discussed future directions, particularly as they relate to the theme of the Forum.

## Issues and Recommendations from the Regional and Subregional Consultation Meetings

From their diverse perspectives, participants in the consultation meetings identified key issues and formulated recommendations to guide discussions at the upcoming IPFI global meeting.

### Key Issues

1. Land tenure insecurity continues to threaten Indigenous Peoples' ability to protect their territories and manage resources. Commercial interests, weak legal protections, and limited recognition of traditional land systems remain significant barriers to Indigenous Peoples' well-being and self-determination.
2. Indigenous communities face severe effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, loss of biodiversity, and extreme weather. While their knowledge offers solutions, they often lack the necessary support and resources to

implement these solutions effectively.

3. Indigenous Peoples' food systems are being disrupted by environmental degradation and external market pressures, leading to growing food insecurity. Protecting Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and practices is essential for restoring balance and autonomy.
4. Indigenous Peoples are often excluded from key policy and development processes. Insufficient and inadequate consultation, lack of enforcement of FPIC, and limited representation in decision-making bodies hinder their participation and weaken their voice.
5. The loss of traditional languages, rituals and governance systems poses a threat to Indigenous Peoples' identity and community cohesion. Rapid globalization and external development projects often accelerate this erosion.

## Recommendations to IFAD

1. FPIC processes: Systematically apply FPIC at all project stages, ensuring that Indigenous voices are respected and consent obtained, with robust monitoring for compliance.
2. Access to funding: Increase resources available through the IPAF, and simplify funding processes to reduce bureaucracy, ensuring equitable access for IPOs, especially Indigenous women and youth-led initiatives.
3. Climate adaptation and traditional knowledge: Support projects blending traditional practices with modern strategies, including agroecology, reforestation, and biodiversity conservation.
4. Dialogue platforms: Strengthen national and regional platforms for ongoing dialogue among Indigenous communities, governments and partners to share best practices and address local challenges.
5. Food sovereignty: Prioritize funding for sustainable food systems rooted in Indigenous knowledge, including seed banks, agroforestry and traditional crops.
6. Capacity-building: Invest in leadership, governance and technical training, with tailored support for Indigenous women and youth to amplify their roles.
7. Impact monitoring: Create participatory systems to assess social, economic, and environmental impacts of IFAD operations, ensuring Indigenous Peoples' active involvement for accountability and improvement.

## Expected Outputs of the Seventh Global Meeting

The general goal of the seventh IPFI global meeting is to generate discussions and recommendations that will guide IFAD's partnership with Indigenous Peoples during the 2025–2026 biennium and contribute to the overall implementation of the Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples. In keeping with this goal, the expected outputs are as follows:

- Assessment of the progress made since the 2023 IPFI global meeting;
- Reflection on Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination and its implications for IFAD's work;
- Development of regional action plans for the 2025–2026 biennium;
- Synthesis of deliberations presented to the IFAD Governing Council; and
- 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 (Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America - FILAC)  
Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (International Indigenous Women's Forum - FIMI)  
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)  
Mainyoto Pastoralist Development Organization (MPIDO)  
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)  
Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (National Indigenous Organization of Colombia - ONIC)  
Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF)  
Red de Jóvenes Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe (Indigenous Youth Network of Latin America and the Caribbean - RJI)  
Samburu Women Trust (SWT)  
Sweden  
Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education)



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Links:

- Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD**  
<https://www.ifad.org/en/indigenous-peoples/ips-forum>
- Seventh Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD**  
<https://www.ifad.org/en/w/events/seventh-global-meeting-of-the-indigenous-peoples-forum-at-ifad>
- United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**  
<https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii>