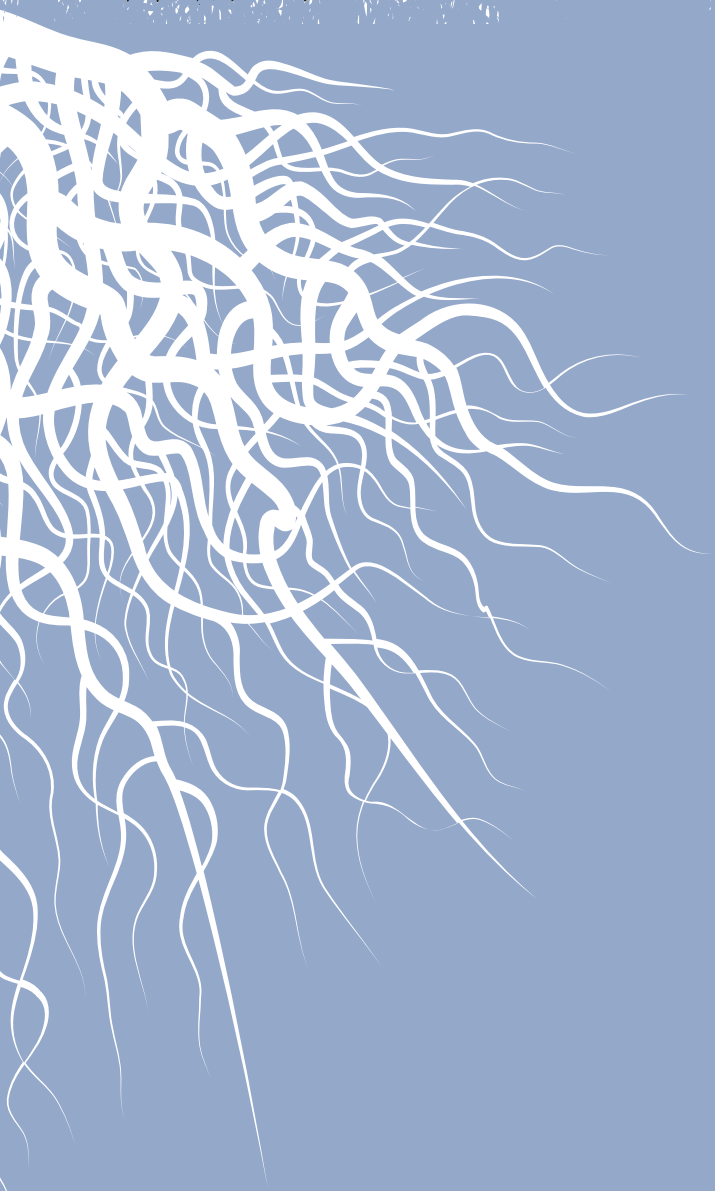
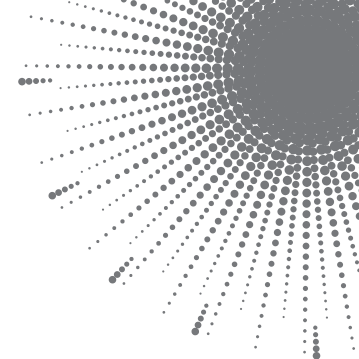


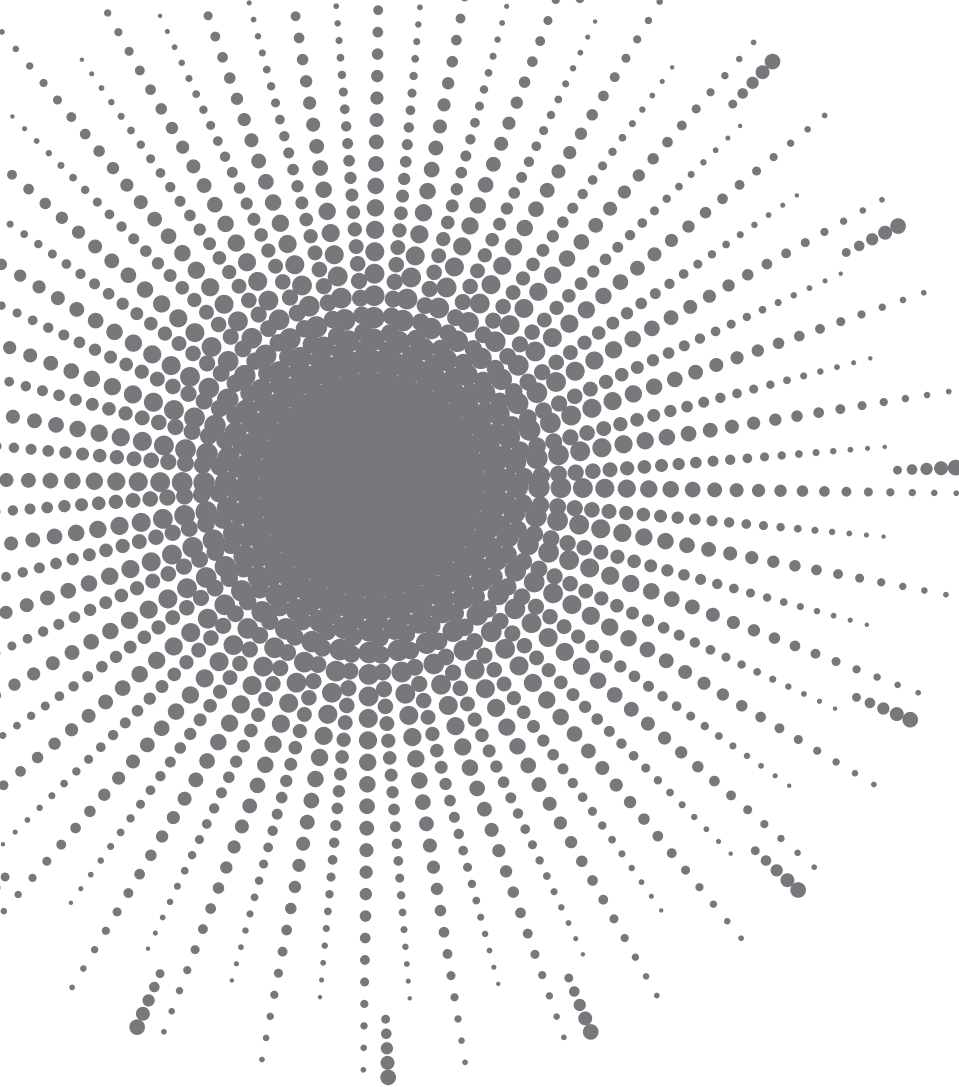


**FAO POLICY
ON INDIGENOUS
AND TRIBAL PEOPLES**



FAO POLICY ON INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES





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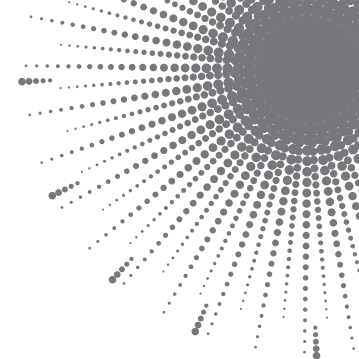
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ACRONYMS

- CSO** Civil Society Organization
- IASG** Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues
- ILO** International Labour Organization
- NGO** Non-Governmental Organization
- UN** United Nations
- UNDAF** United Nations Development Assistance Framework
- UNDG** United Nations Development Group
- UNDRIP** United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- UNPFII** United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues



FOREWORD

Consistent with its mandate to pursue a world free from hunger and malnutrition, the following “FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples” has been formulated so as to ensure that FAO will make all due efforts to respect, include and promote indigenous issues in relevant work. In so doing, it joins the international community’s increasing mobilization in favour of the rights and concerns of indigenous peoples, most of whom suffer disproportionately from multiple adversities such as discrimination, poverty, ill health, political under-representation, and environmental and cultural degradation. Although much attention is focused on the challenges that indigenous peoples face, it is equally important to remember the specialized knowledge and ingenuity which often characterize indigenous livelihood practices. As an organization which specializes in rural poverty reduction and food security, it is imperative for FAO to consider indigenous peoples as fundamental stakeholders and partners in development.

The policy has been prepared through a consultative process under the overall guidance of FAO’s interdepartmental working group on indigenous issues, which is comprised of members from the Organization’s different technical departments and decentralized offices. Key inputs were provided by numerous partners, including representatives of indigenous peoples, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, several UN agencies, FAO management, and various experts. Its content is based on international legal instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 and representing the highest standard for the treatment of indigenous peoples around the world.

The central purpose of the policy is to provide a framework to guide FAO’s work where indigenous peoples are concerned. It gives information about indigenous peoples’ livelihoods, world views and concerns about development, including certain “core principles” which should be at the heart of joint activities. The policy also defines a series of thematic areas where collaborative opportunities are most feasible. At the same time, a number of mechanisms are suggested that will allow cooperation with indigenous peoples to move forward in a more systematic way.

With the preparation of this policy paper, FAO aspires to play an important role in the international community’s efforts to ensure a better life for indigenous peoples and rural populations. The fight against hunger cannot be won without them.

Jacques Diouf
Director-General, FAO

I. INTRODUCTION

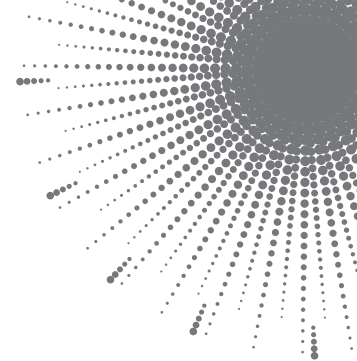
The Member Nations of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have defined the organization's ultimate objectives as being to "improve agricultural productivity, raise levels of nutrition, better the lives of rural populations, and contribute to the growth of the world economy." As a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN), FAO has a primary role to play in promoting greater food security and reduced poverty. FAO has long realized that achieving these objectives requires the involvement of society at large; indeed, the consensus that development efforts must include various actors and stakeholders is now widespread.

Indigenous peoples¹ must be considered an undeniable stakeholder in a development agenda shaped by such a mandate. Recent estimates indicate that although indigenous peoples make up approximately 5 percent of the world's total population, they comprise about 15 percent of the global poor.² The adversities faced by indigenous peoples have grown in the last few decades, but so too have the recognition of and appreciation for their potential contributions to sustainable development and natural resources management. Protecting the livelihood systems and specialized knowledge that are held within these communities will reverse the steady erosion of indigenous cultures but may also bring novel solutions to the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition, poverty and environmental degradation.

In response to continuously growing pressures and rapid changes taking place in the world, the international community has urged for more concerted efforts to respond to the needs and demands of indigenous peoples. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the General Assembly in September 2007, has given a major impetus to these efforts by prompting national authorities to pursue greater action on this front. The Declaration is today the highest international standard in this area. This and International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989) are the most powerful and comprehensive international instruments recognizing the situation of indigenous peoples and defending their most important rights. FAO's responsibility to observe and implement UNDRIP is clearly stated in Article 41:

1 The term 'indigenous peoples' is used for simplicity throughout this text.

2 UN Economic and Social Council, Department of Public Information. 2006. Action Programme for Second Indigenous Decade Launched, as UN Forum Opens Two-Week Session at Headquarters [online]. Available at: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/hr4888.doc.htm.



The organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations shall contribute to the full realization of the provisions of this Declaration through the mobilization, inter alia, of financial cooperation and technical assistance. Ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them shall be established.

Consistent with FAO's mandate to pursue a world free from hunger and malnutrition, and grounded in the utmost respect for universal human rights, this policy is in place to ensure that FAO will make all due efforts to respect, include and promote indigenous peoples' issues in its overall work. The policy is motivated by the fundamental fact that indigenous communities make up a substantial portion of the world's food insecure, that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and by recognition of the benefits that arise from closer collaboration. At the same time, it responds to the explicit request made by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), by fellow UN agencies and by indigenous peoples themselves to develop a framework for ensuring that the needs and concerns of indigenous peoples are effectively considered.

The purpose of this policy document is to provide FAO with a framework to guide its work on indigenous peoples' issues. Current activities follow no systematic course of action relating to such issues and will benefit greatly from the delineation of a common direction and approach. At the same time, it is also of relevance to indigenous peoples themselves, helping to communicate and clarify what they can reasonably expect from the Organization.

The document highlights some of the key areas covered by FAO's mandate and addresses the motivations as well as the advantages of a partnership between FAO and indigenous peoples. It is the result of a series of consultations with leaders of indigenous peoples, the UNPFII, the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues (IASG) and members of FAO's professional body. As such, it addresses a diverse set of outlooks and feasible opportunities for future work.

II. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND DEVELOPMENT

In accordance with international consensus,³ FAO will abide by the following criteria when considering indigenous peoples:⁴

- Priority in time, with respect to occupation and use of a specific territory;
- The voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness, which may include aspects of language, social organization, religion and spiritual values, modes of production, laws and institutions;
- Self-identification, as well as recognition by other groups, or by State authorities, as a distinct collectivity; and
- An experience of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion or discrimination, whether or not these conditions persist.⁵

Core principles

Indigenous peoples around the world are culturally distinct, yet they share a number of common values and a shared sense of purpose in their demand for internationally recognized rights and autonomy. These commonalities are expressed in the following core principles and rights, which have been articulated by indigenous representatives and are at the heart of the UN Declaration as well as other international legal and standard-setting instruments. As such, they provide an international framework by which UN agencies are guided. In this respect, they must be addressed when working with indigenous peoples and must consequently also form the basis of FAO's work in this area.

Self-determination

For indigenous peoples the right to development is understood as their right to decide the kind of development that takes place among their people and on their lands and territories, in accordance with their own priorities and conceptions of well-being. The right to self-determination refers precisely to the right of all peoples to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

3 Including ILO Convention 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), *UNDG [UN Development Group] Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues* (2008), the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues.

4 A number of local, national and regional terms are used to describe indigenous peoples, including tribes, ethnic minorities, natives, indigenous nationalities, First Nations, aboriginals, indigenous communities, hill peoples and highland peoples.

5 These characteristics are derived primarily from ILO Conventions 107 (Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957) and 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989), and from J.R. Martinez Cobo. 1987. *Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations*. UN, New York, but also from other international organizations and legal experts. Together, they provide the most accredited description of indigenous peoples.



Development with identity

Development with identity upholds the notion that peoples' sociocultural expressions, values and traditions should not be threatened by the development process. Identity is of fundamental importance to indigenous peoples, who see their livelihood security, well-being and dignity as being inextricably linked with the continuation of their traditions and the preservation of their ancestral lands and territories. Indigenous peoples have differing conceptions of what constitutes 'poverty' and 'well-being.' According to many of them, well-being is a multidimensional condition defined by a range of human experiences, including social, mental, spiritual and cultural welfare. Relatedly, poverty cannot be defined only in terms of material standards; one is poor not only when resources are low, but also when one is unable to live a desired lifestyle. For this reason, indigenous peoples advocate a holistic view of development and livelihood security that transcends models based solely on conventional economic criteria.

Free, prior and informed consent

The principle and right of 'free, prior and informed consent' demands that states and organizations of all kinds and at all levels obtain indigenous peoples' authorization *before* adopting and implementing projects, programmes or legislative and administrative measures that may affect them. It emphasizes that indigenous peoples must be included in consultative processes, that the time requirements for these processes be respected and that information on the likely impact of activities be disclosed in advance. Legitimate consultation measures ensure that activities or actions planned respond to indigenous peoples' concerns and interests, thereby allowing a self-determined development process.

Participation and inclusion

Indigenous peoples claim the right to full and effective participation at every stage of any action that may affect them directly or indirectly. In essence, this implies that there must be no act of coercion, intimidation or manipulation on the part of states, governments, private investors, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or development practitioners. Rather, indigenous peoples should be included as competent and legitimate stakeholders in projects or initiatives that enter their sphere of existence.

Rights over land and other natural resources

Rights over land and other natural resources (water, forests, rangeland etc.) are of particular importance to indigenous peoples as they feel a spiritual attachment to their ancestral origins and commonly depend on natural resources for survival.

This special relationship is crucial to the continuation of indigenous livelihood systems and cultural forms. In respect of this principle, indigenous peoples are entitled to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those that they have otherwise acquired.⁶

Cultural rights

Cultural rights are fundamental for indigenous peoples as their cultures are distinct and threatened by continuous change and pressures for assimilation. In this respect, indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their cultures, but are entitled to live in accordance with the traditions and the customs that underlie their integrity and way of life and are in compliance with universal principles of human rights. Development efforts must ensure that contextual idiosyncrasies and diverse sociocultural expressions are taken into account.

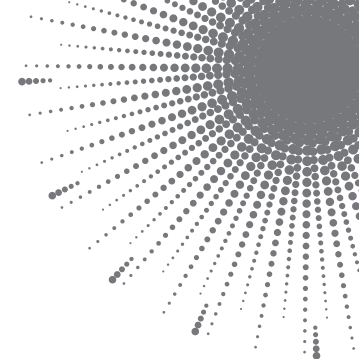
Collective rights

Collective rights are indispensable for the survival, well-being and integral development of indigenous peoples as distinct human groups. These include recognition of their specific histories, languages, identities and cultures but also recognition of their collective rights to the lands, territories and natural resources they have traditionally occupied and used. It also pertains to indigenous peoples' communally held traditional knowledge.

Gender equality

Gender equality exists when people enjoy equal rights, opportunities and rewards regardless of whether they are born female or male. Recognizing the differing roles, needs and priorities of men and women is crucial to protecting and promoting their livelihoods and strengthening their resilience to various types of stress. Despite their substantial contributions to agriculture and household food security, indigenous women in many countries face several levels of discrimination on account of their gender as well as their ethnicity. Promoting the economic and social empowerment of indigenous women is thus fundamental to poverty reduction and development.

⁶ As stated in Article 26(1) of the UNDRIP.



III. RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

FAO's mandate and indigenous peoples

The rationale for engagement with indigenous peoples is grounded in FAO's mandate to achieve food security for all. A development mission of this scope cannot ignore indigenous peoples, who must be regarded not only as *recipients* of much-needed development assistance but primarily as equal *partners* in development.

Many indigenous peoples are economically poor and live in remote, marginal and risk-prone rural environments. Many lack human and citizenship rights, access to markets, information and basic services (such as health delivery systems), as well as opportunities to participate in policy-making. They may also be prevented from participating in development activities and, due to prejudice and/or isolation, be barred from access to public services and other provisions for development and food security. Indigenous economies are often based on subsistence and characterized by limited access to land and other natural resources. Even those who live in urban areas share many of these same problems as migration has often not translated into anticipated job opportunities and economic security.

Overall, indigenous peoples are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation, politico-economic marginalization and development activities that negatively affect their ecosystems, livelihoods, cultural heritage and nutritional status. This vulnerability to multiple adversities means that indigenous peoples require specific attention in order to benefit from development on their own terms. Establishing unambiguous and legally substantiated rights to resources such as land, water, food, seed and animal stock systems is a priority for the survival of indigenous livelihoods. Appropriate investments in conservation measures and technology for agriculture are also of great benefit. In these respects, FAO has a significant role to play.

At the same time, indigenous peoples are providers of valuable knowledge and skills that contribute to sustainable development and natural resources management. Their agricultural practices have demonstrated great adaptiveness and resilience in the past and they continue to play a key role in the domestication, conservation and adaptation of genetic resources and agricultural biodiversity at all scales (gene, species, ecosystem and landscape). The agricultural, hunting, gathering, fishing, animal husbandry and forestry practices of indigenous peoples often integrate economic, environmental, social *and* cultural considerations. In parallel, many have developed knowledge systems, technologies and institutions for the sustainable management of local biodiversity. Traditional diets and coping mechanisms have drawn on this distinctive capacity particularly in times of stress and have played a key role in the ability of many indigenous peoples to subsist

in extreme conditions. This alone is a major contribution to the historic development of the world's agricultural and food systems. Mobilizing the expertise that originates from this heritage and these historical legacies is an important resource for addressing the challenges facing food and agriculture today and in the future. Development programmes that capitalize on these historic insights and that pursue the dynamic conservation of traditional systems against undue loss are thus crucial.

An agenda that pursues global food security, sustainable natural resources management and poverty alleviation cannot ignore indigenous peoples, making them a clear partner of concern to FAO. The Organization's new **Strategic Framework**, adopted by the Conference of FAO in 2008 as part of a comprehensive FAO reform process, offers a number of opportunities for mainstreaming indigenous peoples' issues into FAO's current work plan. The Framework sets out a number of targets and functions that are to be the basis of FAO's overall programme for the 2010–2019 period. Critically, indigenous peoples are *specifically* mentioned within 3 out of 11 of the plan's Strategic Objectives. These direct references relate to issues of sustainable management of land, water and genetic resources, nutrition and biodiversity and forestry development. Explicit statements of this kind essentially commit member countries and the Organization to a more profound engagement. (For more detailed information about the relevance of indigenous peoples' issues to the Framework's various Strategic Objectives, see Annex II.)

The new Strategic Framework thus presents an excellent opportunity to integrate indigenous peoples' issues effectively within FAO's new projected programme of work. At the same time, it is important to stress that the Organization has worked successfully with indigenous peoples in the past; collaboration is an existing reality and an improved relationship is a viable prospect.

Priority areas of work

Collaboration with indigenous peoples must reflect and be formulated in accordance with FAO's core programmes and expertise. The following priority areas of work have been identified as the basis for greater collaboration. They derive from a thematic review of past and ongoing FAO activities related to indigenous peoples' issues, and as such they offer the most feasible platforms for strengthened work. (For more information, see Annex III.) The areas are, however, strongly interrelated and thus should be addressed in a holistic and multi-disciplinary manner.



Natural resources, environment and genetic resources

The right to and sustainable management of natural resources (land, water, fisheries, forests, genetic resources, biodiversity etc.) is crucial for the benefit of present and future generations, particularly those who rely on the environment for their daily survival.

Climate change and bioenergy

Adaptation and mitigation measures are needed to offset the challenges and vulnerabilities that relate to climate change. Bioenergy development offers one potential avenue if sustainability and poverty reduction are taken into consideration. FAO pursues this objective through sustainable small-scale livelihood-oriented bioenergy initiatives, which can provide improved access to sustainable and affordable energy services, enhance livelihoods for rural people and increase their resilience to the effects of climate change, without negative impact on food production and the environment.

Land and territories

Formal recognition of rights over land, territories and other natural resources is a direct factor in the alleviation of hunger and rural poverty. For most indigenous peoples around the world, right to land is severely threatened by uncontrolled expansion of activities related to forestry, mining, tourism and other commercial enterprises. The centrality of land to indigenous peoples makes this area particularly important.

Food security, nutrition and the right to food

The right to adequate food is a fundamental human right and must be safeguarded, particularly for the most vulnerable. FAO leads international efforts to ensure food security, defined as a state in which all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.

Communication and knowledge systems

Communication can generate capacity development, empowerment and positive social change. Access to information, combined with the preservation of traditional skills and knowledge systems, can bring novel solutions to food insecurity, providing effective avenues for sustainable development.

Cultural and biological diversity

Food security is dependent on the continued availability and richness of natural resources, but also on the survival of the diverse cultural systems that sustain them. FAO safeguards the relationship between biological and cultural diversity to ensure more options for hunger alleviation. Pursuing the dynamic conservation of traditional heritage systems – be they agricultural or based on other natural resources – is a central component of this effort.

Economic opportunity for sustainable livelihoods

One of the major constraints to addressing the needs of indigenous and tribal peoples is their lack of access to markets, financial resources and stable sources of production to alleviate poverty and food insecurity. Creating income-generating opportunities and building *long-term* capacities for stable rural employment are central components of FAO's work and an objective of sustainable and self-determined development.

FAO's directive to work with indigenous peoples is framed by the fundamental motives articulated here; they constitute the overarching reasoning behind the development of this policy. Any action or area that affects indigenous communities must also be guided by the principles outlined earlier in this text.

IV. OBJECTIVES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



The following objectives have been formulated as the basis upon which FAO will pursue greater commitment to responding to the needs and concerns of indigenous peoples. They provide stepping stones for a way forward and a commitment to attaining realistic objectives, based on the Organization's strengths and comparative advantages and within its overall mandate towards ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger.



OBJECTIVES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

.....

FAO will improve its institutional environment and capacities to respond to and collaborate with indigenous peoples and their organizations.

.....

FAO will enhance the capacity of governments to engage indigenous peoples at the national and international level, in pursuance of their rights and visions of development.

.....

FAO will integrate indigenous peoples' issues into those normative and operational areas of its work that affect or support indigenous peoples and their traditional agriculture, food and livelihood systems.

.....

FAO will facilitate the direct and effective participation of indigenous peoples in current and future FAO programmes and activities that affect indigenous peoples. It will support enabling environments to foster inclusion of indigenous peoples in the design, execution and evaluation of policies and programmes that concern and/or affect them.





.....

FAO will establish measures to collaborate with indigenous peoples and discourage ventures that will have an adverse impact on their communities. When there is a direct impact or relation to indigenous peoples' issues, it will follow the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that relate to free, prior and informed consent.

.....

FAO will approach indigenous peoples in a way that answers to, interacts with and learns from their unique food and agriculture practices, livelihood systems and specific sociocultural circumstances, thus building on their potential contributions and actively encouraging 'development with identity.'

.....

FAO activities that affect indigenous peoples will be guided by the human rights-based approach to development, premised on the notion that everyone should live in dignity and attain the highest standards of humanity guaranteed by international human rights law. It will be guided in particular by the core principles expressed in this policy document and by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



FAO's objectives for engagement with indigenous peoples are formulated in light of its expertise and in recognition of the rights to which indigenous peoples are entitled under international law. Consultation and free, prior and informed consent will be sought when FAO projects directly affect indigenous peoples. At the same time, prospective activities *must* be consistent with FAO's mandate concerning food security and nutrition; the Organization will not get involved in any programme judged antithetical to or outside of its ultimate goal.

The objectives that have been formulated must also be considered in light of FAO's nature as an intergovernmental organization. Any activity, particularly at the national level, must be endorsed by the concerned government and relevant authority, which may at time influence the degree and potential for engagement with indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, FAO's role as a neutral forum, and in light of its commitment to universal human rights, means that much emphasis is placed on dialogue as an avenue for common understanding.



V. MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE FAO POLICY ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

FAO's engagement with indigenous peoples will focus on areas that build on its established activities and ways of working. The following mechanisms are aligned with FAO's *Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations* so as to ensure an overall complementarity between the two. A dual function is envisioned: to increase FAO's effectiveness in enabling governments to respond to the particular needs and demands of indigenous peoples on the one hand, and to increase the capacity of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their livelihoods in accordance with sociocultural preferences on the other. FAO will endeavour to promote such measures among its partners at all levels. Ultimately, these measures are in keeping with FAO's mandate to pursue development that is equitable as well as sustainable.

A. Information sharing and analysis

FAO serves as a knowledge network in order to share expertise, sensitize public opinion and ensure that its programmes and activities are based on thorough and up-to-date information from the real world. To improve information sharing and analysis related to indigenous peoples' issues, FAO will undertake more of the following areas.

A.1. Awareness-raising

Raising awareness about the conditions in which indigenous peoples live provides the groundwork upon which greater action and greater commitment take shape. As a knowledge-sharing organization, FAO has both the technical know-how and capacity to disseminate information that aids development more generally. Research and outreach are FAO strengths and must continue as integral components of this policy as well.

A.2. Communication and data collection

Collecting disaggregated data on ethnicity and gender and producing quantitative as well as qualitative evidence on living standards and other indices will make a major contribution to convincing policy-makers and member countries to take indigenous peoples' issues seriously. Developing databases to store and share such information will also help provide a common basis from which to pursue collaborative activities. Without a reliable set of facts and figures it is difficult to determine development priorities and to target actions effectively. Good communication and information will thus increase understanding and encourage action.

A.3. Research with indigenous communities

FAO will undertake studies of livelihoods among indigenous peoples living in the countries in which it has ongoing activities. Greater understanding of particular indigenous food and livelihood systems brings greater understanding of the individual needs and concerns of indigenous peoples. At the same time, the active engagement of indigenous communities themselves in producing such knowledge can generate a sense of ownership. This, in turn, will ensure that development programmes will be better tailored to the particular requirements of a given community and locality. With such *a priori* information, FAO would be better able to respond in times of crisis and in accordance with the principles so integral to indigenous peoples' rights and livelihood security.

B. Policy dialogue and normative work

FAO plays an important role as an international forum, providing a meeting place where key stakeholders can come together to discuss issues and forge agreements related to food and agriculture. These experiences are used to help countries devise policies, draft effective legislation and create national strategies to achieve rural development and alleviate hunger. FAO also works to set standards to protect people and resources against damaging or unfair practices. Normative instruments such as codes and conventions are necessary to establish acceptable parameters and behaviour. In order to make policy dialogue and normative work more comprehensive, FAO will give greater attention to the following areas.

B.1. Dialogue

It is important for FAO to engage in dialogue with indigenous peoples in order to communicate effectively what can be done for *and with* them as stipulated by FAO's mandate and operational boundaries. Just as it is fundamental for FAO to delineate its institutional commitment to indigenous peoples and increase its capacity to respond to their needs, it is equally important to clarify to indigenous peoples what can be realistically expected from FAO. This kind of outreach will ensure that collaboration can be established around common goals and common understanding.

In order for such an exchange to occur, it is necessary to have a representative body of indigenous peoples with which to engage. The Civil Society Forum that took place on the occasion of the World Food Summit in November 2009 provided the beginnings of such a body. Representatives of indigenous peoples discussed the possibility of forming a follow-up committee for better representation and consulta-



tion with Rome-based UN bodies in the future. FAO welcomes this proposal and, if the body is established, will consider it a counterpart through which partnership and dialogue can move forward.

B.2. Participation/inclusion

Greater participation in development processes is a cornerstone of indigenous peoples' rights. For projects that involve or affect indigenous peoples, FAO will facilitate the inclusion of representatives of indigenous peoples in its consultations and programming cycles, in accordance with the principle of "free, prior and informed consent". This commitment is also in accord with the reform of the Committee on World Food Security, whose composition has been expanded to "ensure that the voices of all relevant stakeholders – particularly those most affected by food insecurity – are heard." This includes "organizations representing smallholder family farmers, artisanal fisherfolk, herders/pastoralists, landless, urban poor, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, consumers, *Indigenous Peoples* [emphasis added], and International NGOs whose mandates and activities are concentrated in the areas of concern to the Committee."⁷ Such a significant restructuring of global governance is a prime opportunity for indigenous peoples and those working to assist them.

Regular and effectively formatted multistakeholder consultations with member countries, research institutions, other UN agencies, private sector organizations and civil society groups are a means to engage important development agents in a respectful sharing of ideas and expertise. As a neutral forum, FAO must ensure that indigenous peoples and other significant stakeholders are involved in such dialogues so that they are not excluded from development processes.

Increased participation of indigenous peoples in FAO committees, conferences and regional conferences will afford them greater visibility in FAO technical work and governance. One viable entry point for indigenous peoples' representatives to participate in FAO-organized fora is through FAO's internal civil society liaison, which is responsible for organizing consultations with and accreditation of NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs). Another feasible channel of engagement is through the internal private sector cooperation group, whose responsibility is to facilitate linkages between FAO and private partners, especially in relation to the value-chain approach, the promotion of small and medium enterprises and the creation of income-generating opportunities, market linkages and fair-trade networks.

⁷ FAO, Committee on World Food Security. 2009. *Reform of the Committee on World Food Security*. FAO, Rome, Italy. Available at: www.csa-be.org/IMG/doc_CFS_Reform_Draft_plenary_17_10_09_final_clean_REV_2_-2.doc.

Specific attention must also be paid to the participation of indigenous women in such dialogue. In some regions, indigenous women suffer multiple causes of discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. However, they are critical sources of valuable knowledge and information. Participation of indigenous youth in the dialogue must also be promoted.

B.3. Standard-setting

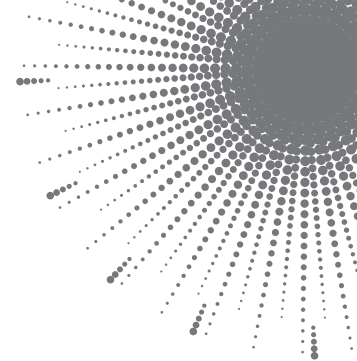
FAO contributes to the formulation of international instruments that take into account indigenous peoples' rights. These instruments can be used by indigenous peoples to lobby for their rights and needs. For example, the *Right to Food Guidelines*, adopted by the FAO Council in 2004, make policy recommendations to assist stakeholders in implementing the right to food at the national level; these recommendations contain a number of references to indigenous peoples. The 2001 International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) recognizes the contributions made by indigenous peoples and local farming communities to the conservation and development of the plant genetic resources that constitute the basis of food and agricultural production throughout the world. The International Treaty mandates national governments to promote the rights of farmers, including protection of their traditional knowledge, equitable sharing of benefits and participation in the relevant decision-making processes.

C. Field programme

FAO's field programme focuses on achieving conditions for food and nutritional security and poverty alleviation directly on the ground. To ensure effective field activities in member countries, FAO will support the following activities.

C.1. Capacity development for indigenous peoples

Since indigenous peoples frequently face many obstacles and risks, it is crucial to strengthen their capacities to deal with intense socio-economic, ecological and cultural change. FAO assistance to government policies and programmes that provide direct support to indigenous peoples already exists and offers a good foundation for future work. Some of these policies and programmes help strengthen indigenous peoples' autonomous livelihood systems and sustainable production practices through measures that enhance their working capacity. For example, small textile enterprises have been created that allow indigenous communities to raise enough income to meet their daily needs. Other interventions help governments to create institutional environments that enable disadvantaged groups to participate



in more lucrative and sustainable economic activities. Examples include identification of, adding value to and preservation of specific quality products linked to the places and traditions of indigenous peoples, development of fair-trade networks linking small producers to local markets, support for cooperative production and trade activities, and national legislation that strengthens individual and community access to land and other productive resources.

C.2. Capacity development for FAO staff

Capacity development within FAO must go hand in hand with awareness-raising efforts and technical work in the field. FAO staff need to develop *practical* skills to understand, consider and integrate indigenous peoples' issues into relevant policies and programmes. The *UNDG Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues* offer one basis for improving such an engagement; they exist precisely to guide the integration of indigenous peoples' issues into project cycles and strategies and should therefore be applied more consistently by FAO staff. In addition, staff can use the *Resource Kit on Indigenous Peoples' Issues* and the *Training Module on Indigenous Peoples' Issues* developed by the UN and its partners.

Another necessary component of capacity development and awareness-raising is the promotion of inter- and intracultural sensitivity. Development workers need to be conscious of local dynamics and be prepared to tailor development interventions so as to avoid negative effects on the communities they aim to assist, especially on non-mainstream groups such as indigenous peoples. This capacity is absolutely necessary if interventions are to be consistent with indigenous peoples' traditional norms and sociocultural preferences.

Dimensions of dialogue, negotiation skills, policy assistance, lobbying and conflict mediation are also extremely important.

D. Resource mobilization and increased coordination

FAO is not a funding institution, but it acts as a broker to ensure that development funds are channelled in the right direction and used to improve the conditions of those who need it. FAO's prime responsibilities are therefore to mobilize technical competencies in partnership with donors and key stakeholders. To enhance this process and make sure that development efforts are approached in a multidisciplinary and holistic manner, FAO will capitalize on established relations with donors, partners in the field and other international agencies.

D.1. Collaboration in resource mobilization

To enhance avenues for working with indigenous peoples, FAO will take action in the following areas:

- *NGO–FAO programmes*: promote programmes operated in partnership with indigenous NGOs/CSOs in which FAO would provide technical assistance/capacity-development components.
- *UN funding sources*: review the interest of the UN system in funding cooperation with indigenous NGOs/CSOs.
- *FAO/government relations*: explore possibilities for future projects by including discussions of indigenous peoples' issues in meetings with donors.
- *Technical Cooperation Programme*: provide technical assistance (with government endorsement) to strengthen indigenous NGOs/CSOs and involve them where appropriate in implementing grassroots development activities.
- *TeleFood*: use resources mobilized through the TeleFood campaign as a source of co-funding for grassroots initiatives in indigenous communities.

D.2. Coordination and cooperation within the UN system

There are a number of existing international bodies and mechanisms that recognize indigenous peoples as distinct collectivities with specific rights and with which FAO has an ongoing role. Increasing the authority and effectiveness of such institutions will facilitate cross-agency relations and allow a more integrated approach to issues that must be tackled together. The IASG, for example, brings key international players together to support the mandate of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Concretizing FAO's own approach will strengthen its substantive contribution to the IASG and thereby also strengthen the effectiveness of the IASG within the UN system as a whole. This, in turn, will reinforce the institutional processes through which indigenous peoples can engage more effectively in development efforts.

As part of the UN reform process, the adoption of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is also a substantial step forward in improving collaboration among national governments, programmes and UN agencies including FAO.⁸ Pushing for greater consideration of indigenous peoples' issues within UNDAF will ensure a more integrated UN system response to an issue that international consensus has deemed imperative.

⁸ UNDAF is a planning framework geared towards strengthening the overall efficiency and productivity of development interventions in specific countries, consisting of common UN-wide objectives and strategies of cooperation, a programme resources framework and proposals for follow-up, monitoring and evaluation.



D.3. Collaboration within FAO

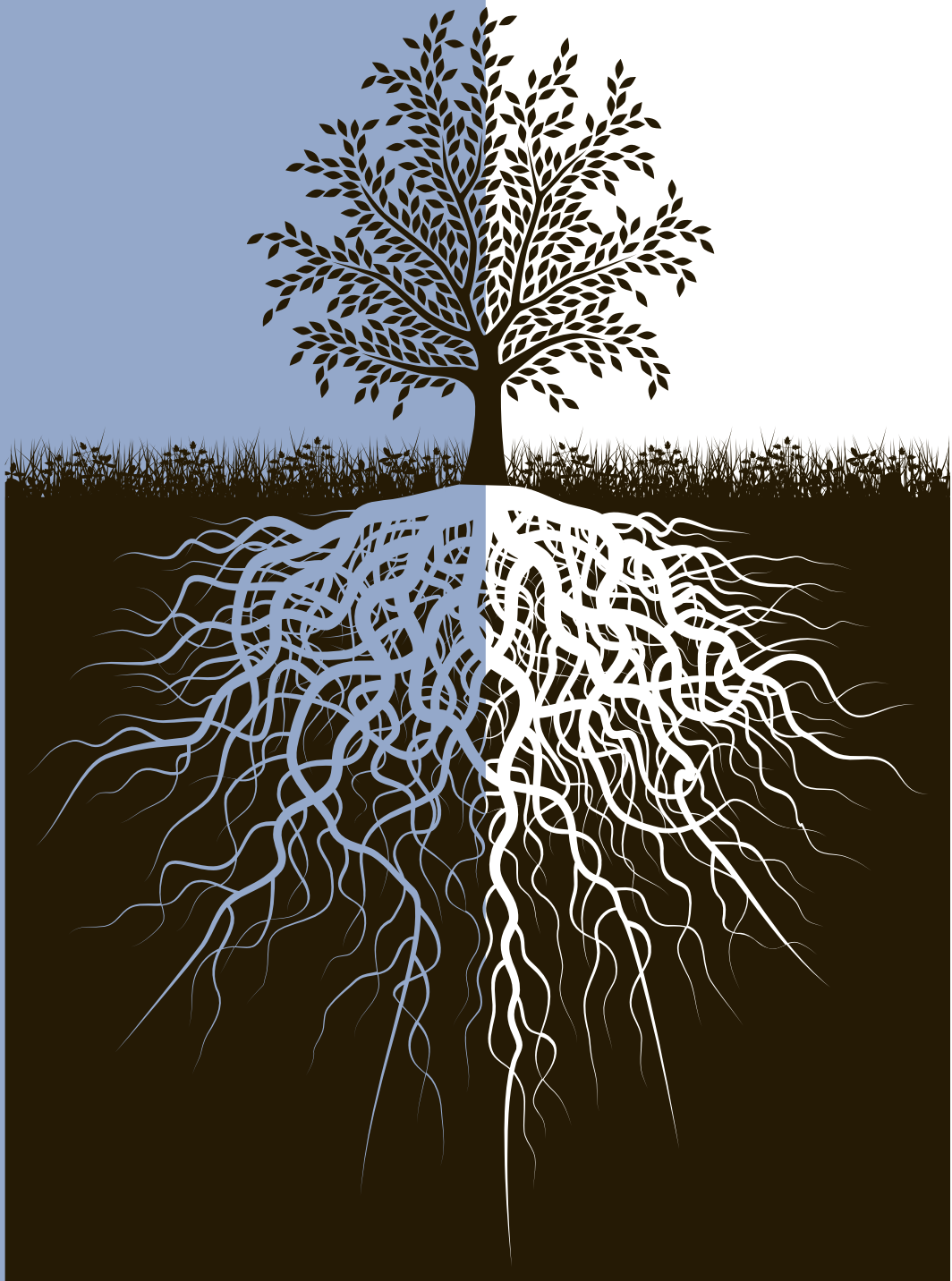
FAO's interdepartmental working group on indigenous issues will be reinforced so as to become an effective platform to promote greater FAO engagement with indigenous peoples. The working group consists of a network of focal points from the Organization's various technical divisions. Members exchange information and support the formulation of coherent and coordinated FAO positions on indigenous peoples' issues. At present, however, the working group operates only on an informal basis. Formalizing the working group and its terms of reference is necessary to foster more resolute action and greater mainstreaming of indigenous peoples' issues throughout the Organization.

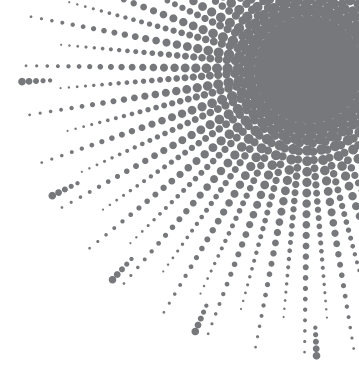
At the same time, this work will benefit from improved overall communication within FAO headquarters and throughout the Organization. This can be done initially by creating working group focal points in FAO's regional and subregional offices and enhancing their capacities to respond to indigenous peoples' needs at national, subregional, regional and international levels. In so doing, collaboration with indigenous peoples itself will concurrently be strengthened.

It is essential for FAO to promote better staff understanding of indigenous peoples, to work more systematically with indigenous peoples and their organizations, and – as a number of UN agencies and multilateral institutions have done – to implement this cross-cutting policy that guides how the Organization's normative and operational programmes deal with indigenous peoples' specific characteristics, needs and contributions. It is also necessary to ensure that indigenous peoples are not negatively affected by possible indirect consequences of development efforts; unfortunately such negative effects occur frequently but with no less impact on people's livelihoods.

FAO will seek to make due efforts to allocate more resources to indigenous peoples' issues in the future and will consider the possibility of establishing a more coherent programme that can strengthen activities on indigenous peoples' issues and serve as a platform for advocating greater engagement.

Given the high level of diversity among indigenous peoples, the present policy provides a broad framework and common direction for guiding the Organization's action in this area.





ANNEX I INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: THE INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Indigenous peoples have progressively brought their voices to crucial negotiations and decision-making processes worldwide. As a result of decades of advocacy, the international community has increasingly recognized the socio-economic marginalization of indigenous groups, their systematic exclusion from the benefits of economic growth, and the deleterious impacts that global processes have often had on their cultures, identities and resources. In parallel, the importance of indigenous peoples' unique contribution to social and economic development is also gaining greater appreciation.

The following are major milestones that have accompanied this progress towards the full realization of indigenous peoples' rights and livelihood security. They are to be regarded as the highest international standards, providing the legal basis upon which this FAO policy and related work are built.

International legal framework concerning indigenous peoples

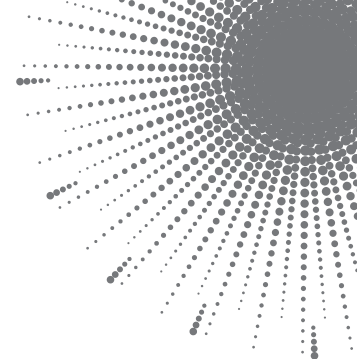
Year	Title	Description
Conventions		
1957	ILO Convention 107	First international convention on the subject. This was the earliest attempt to codify international obligations of States in respect of indigenous and tribal populations. It defines indigenous peoples as distinct peoples and emphasizes the need to improve the living and working conditions to which they are exposed.
1989	ILO Convention 169	Successor to Convention 107. Provides an updated and more comprehensive international legal instrument delineating the rights to which indigenous peoples are entitled and the principles by which States, multilateral organizations and other actors should abide.
1992	Agenda 21 and Rio Declaration (UN Conference on Environment and Development)	These recognize indigenous peoples as a “major group” and state that efforts to implement sustainable development should recognize, accommodate, promote and strengthen the role of indigenous peoples and their communities.
1993	Convention on Biological Diversity [Articles 8(j) and 10(c)] (UN Conference on Environment and Development)	Article 8(j) of the Convention recognizes the significant contribution of indigenous peoples to environmental conservation. It calls on Contracting Parties to respect, preserve and maintain the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities, and encourages the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their utilization. Article 10(c) calls on Parties to protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation and sustainable use requirements.
1994	UN Convention to Combat Desertification	In Articles 16 (g) and 17 (c), the Convention calls for the protection of indigenous traditional knowledge, technologies and practices.



Declarations		
1992	Cancun Declaration – International Conference on Responsible Fishing	Article 9 of the Cancun Declaration declares that “States should take measures to ensure respect for the interests of small-scale artisanal and <i>indigenous fishers</i> [emphasis added].”
1993	Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action – World Conference on Human Rights	This conference took historic steps to promote and protect the rights of frequently marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, women and children. Through the Vienna Declaration, the Conference explicitly stressed the “inherent dignity and the unique contribution of indigenous people to the development and plurality of society and strongly reaffirms the commitment of the international community to their economic, social and cultural well-being and their enjoyment of the fruits of sustainable development.” It also called for the establishment of a Permanent Forum.
2002	Declaration of Atitlán	The Declaration emphasizes the importance of indigenous peoples’ rights to lands, natural resources and self-determination to their overall food security and food sovereignty.
2007	UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	After 20 years of negotiation, the Declaration establishes a vital standard for eliminating human rights violations against indigenous peoples worldwide, for combating discrimination and marginalization and for advocating the protection of indigenous livelihoods. It emphasizes the rights of indigenous peoples to pursue development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations, including the right to maintain and foster their own institutions, cultures and traditions.
2009	Anchorage Declaration	In Article 9 of the Declaration, UN agencies are urged to address climate change impacts in their strategies and action plans, especially with regard to indigenous peoples. In particular, the declaration calls upon FAO and other relevant UN bodies to establish a working group to address the impacts of climate change on food security and food sovereignty of indigenous peoples.

International mechanisms specifically addressing indigenous peoples and their rights

Year	Mechanism	Description
1982	UN Commission on Human Rights' Working Group on Indigenous Populations, to prepare an International Convention on Indigenous Peoples	Established as a subsidiary organ to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (now known as the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights). Its purpose was to facilitate dialogue, review developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples and give attention to the evolution of international standards in this area.
1987	Cobo Report: <i>Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations</i>	Famous study ordered by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, prepared by Special Rapporteur José Martínez Cobo. The report addressed a wide range of human rights issues affecting indigenous peoples, and was an important catalyst for UN action relating to the protection of indigenous peoples' rights.
1995–2004	First International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples	Proclaimed by the General Assembly in December 1993, its main objective was to strengthen international cooperation to solve problems faced by indigenous peoples in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health.
2000	Establishment of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues	Formally integrates indigenous peoples and their representatives into the structure of the UN. It placed state and non-state actors on an equal footing in a UN permanent representative body for the first time. Its mandate is to discuss and provide recommendations on indigenous peoples' issues relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.



2001	Appointment of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people (Commission on Human Rights)	Resulting from a decision of the Human Rights Council, in 2001 a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people was appointed.
2002	First annual meeting of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues	The first annual meeting took place at UN Headquarters in New York City from 13 to 24 May 2002. The first meeting brought together indigenous leaders and civil society from all parts of the world.
2005–2010	Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples	The Second Decade aims to further strengthen international cooperation to solve problems faced by indigenous peoples.
2006	Establishment of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues	Established to support and promote the mandate of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues within the UN system. Its mandate was later expanded to include support to mandates related to issues of indigenous peoples throughout the inter-governmental system.
2008	First session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Composed of five experts, the mechanism offers thematic expertise on the rights of indigenous peoples to the Human Rights Council.

Documents guiding development practices with indigenous peoples

Year	Document	Description
2008	<i>UNDG Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues</i>	Prepared by the UN Development Group, the guidelines provide information on the international human rights framework that guides the UN's work on indigenous peoples' issues. They also provide practical advice on designing programmes with a special focus on such issues.
2008	<i>Resource Kit on Indigenous Peoples' Issues</i>	The Resource Kit provides UN Country Teams with guidance on how to engage with indigenous peoples.
2009	<i>UN-REDD Programme Operational Guidance: Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Other Forest Dependent Communities</i>	Developed to ensure that consideration for and participation of local and indigenous peoples are integrated into the work of the UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD), the Guidance is endorsed but considered a living document always in the process of change.

Other important standard-setting instruments recognizing the human rights of all people

Year	Instrument	Description
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Represents the first global expression of rights to which all human beings are entitled.
1963	UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	A human rights proclamation issued by the UN General Assembly. The Declaration is an important precursor to the legally binding International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
1965	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	The Convention is a legally binding mechanism that commits UN members to the elimination of racial discrimination and promotion of understanding among all races.



1966	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	This Covenant commits its parties to work toward the granting of economic, social and cultural rights to individuals, including labour rights and rights to health, education and an adequate standard of living.
1966	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Among other provisions, this Covenant advocates protection against discrimination based on gender, religion, race or other characteristics.
1995	Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO)	Among other provisions, this voluntary Code provides for due recognition to the traditional practices, needs and interests of indigenous people (Article 7.6.6).
2001	UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity	This UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Declaration established universal rights to cultural identity, diversity and pluralism.
2004	Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (FAO)	These guidelines provide practical guidance to countries for the implementation of the right to food.
2004	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	Article 5 requires parties to promote an integrated approach to the exploration, conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. In particular, it calls on Parties to “promote or support, as appropriate, farmers and local communities’ efforts to manage and conserve on-farm their plant genetic resources for food and agriculture” [Article 5(c)] and to “promote <i>in situ</i> conservation of wild crop relatives and wild plants for food production, including in protected areas, by supporting, <i>inter alia</i> , the efforts of indigenous and local communities” [Article 5(d)]
2007	Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources	Strategic priority 6 calls on the international community to “support indigenous and local production systems and associated knowledge systems of importance to the maintenance and sustainable use of animal genetic resources.”

ANNEX II FAO'S NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2010–2019

How indigenous peoples' issues fit into FAO's overall work plan

In 2008, the FAO Conference approved the development of a new Strategic Framework and Medium-Term Plan. These identify key strategic objectives that reflect FAO's vision and represent the primary development impacts sought through the Organization's work. Indigenous peoples' issues are relevant to the achievement of a number of targets, making collaboration between FAO and indigenous peoples feasible and advisable.

Strategic Objective A is to provide an adequate supply of quality food through sustainable crop production and better management of plant genetic resources. Particularly relevant for indigenous peoples is the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which calls for increased support of local and indigenous communities.

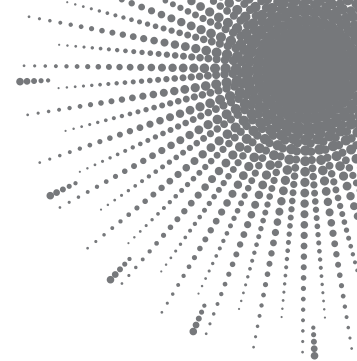
Strategic Objective B focuses on sustainable livestock production. Through the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources, it calls for efforts to support the contributions of indigenous and local communities to animal genetic diversity.

Strategic Objective C concerns sustainable management and use of fisheries and aquaculture resources, including the application of human rights instruments. Among other things, it supports small-scale fishers, including indigenous fishing communities, in their fight against poverty, natural resource depletion, climate change, price volatility and other threats.

Strategic Objective D focuses on food biodiversity and sustainable diets. It pursues capacity development for improved safety and quality of food, with greater consideration for the health and nutritional benefits of local/traditional food systems, including those of indigenous peoples.

Strategic Objective E is to promote sustainable management of forests and trees through an approach that interlinks the social, economic and environmental aspects of forestry. A renewed emphasis has been placed on improving involvement of local stakeholders, including indigenous forest-dwelling communities.

Strategic Objective F concerns sustainable natural resource management and, among other things, calls for more equitable access to and secure tenure of land,



water and other resources by vulnerable constituencies such as women, indigenous peoples and youth.

Strategic Objective G facilitates the creation of enabling environments for markets to improve livelihoods and rural development. Since poor access to markets, financial resources and stable employment is a major constraint faced by indigenous peoples, developing capacities in this area is key to longer-term security.

Strategic Objective H states that improved food security and nutrition may benefit from a greater utilization of locally-specific knowledge, tools and resources, including traditional and local knowledge.

Strategic Objective I emphasizes the need to improve the response capacities and emergency preparedness of poor people in rural areas who are particularly vulnerable to threats and crises affecting agricultural and other natural resources.

Strategic Objective K promotes socially inclusive policies, capacities, institutions and programmes. It stresses the need to fill critical gaps in gender and equity issues, and to redress social imbalances that have favoured certain groups over others.

Finally, the new Strategic Framework also puts renewed emphasis on working through strong partnerships and alliances (**Core Function H**), including CSOs and NGOs with pertinent best knowledge and capacities.

FAO's new Strategic Framework thus presents an excellent opportunity to effectively integrate indigenous peoples' issues within FAO's new projected work plan; the Strategic Objectives are to be utilized as the groundwork for establishing a more concerted relationship. Many of the issues that have been highlighted as feasible points of engagement have already been addressed in FAO projects and programmes. It is important to stress that the Organization has worked successfully with indigenous peoples in the past, demonstrating that such engagement is an existing reality and that an improved relationship is a viable prospect. At the same time, FAO's practical engagement with indigenous communities will benefit significantly from increased institutional support and from the existence of a policy framework to guide action in this area. This policy will therefore help strengthen and expand such efforts for the benefit of indigenous peoples, FAO and sustainable development activities overall.

ANNEX III

PRIORITY AREAS OF WORK

Indigenous peoples and FAO share an interest in a number of specific themes within food and agriculture. Outlined below, these themes correspond to FAO's core programme areas and are derived from activities that already exist; as such, they offer the most feasible platforms for collaborative action. The areas are strongly interrelated and thus should be addressed in a holistic and multidisciplinary manner.

Natural resources, environment and genetic resources

Because many indigenous peoples seek to live in symbiosis with the environment and are highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, they have developed specialized knowledge about nature's resources and diversity, both on land and in the water. However, efforts to achieve food security and sustainable development are being compromised by continuing environmental degradation and the erosion of traditional skills.

Strengthening agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices – at both national and community levels – is therefore imperative for the sound functioning and sustainability of the world's ecosystems. Issues of right to access to and use of natural resources, as well as their quality and conservation, are central to such an effort.

Climate change and bioenergy

Indigenous peoples' lands and territories are particularly vulnerable to climate change, primarily because of the fragility of the ecosystems in which many live and upon which they depend. On the other hand, the ability of indigenous peoples to survive in such environments can provide valuable information as to how to adapt to future climate scenarios, and their in-depth knowledge of specific indigenous species could enrich the world's knowledge base on how to respond to climate change. Ultimately, the long-term effects of climate change, including the accelerated loss and deterioration of natural resources, biodiversity and associated food systems, must be mitigated if indigenous and other rural communities are to withstand such pressures and survive.

Bioenergy has the potential to contribute to climate change mitigation, but also to energy security and to agricultural and rural development more generally. Much of this depends, however, on the type of feedstock, production system and institutional arrangements that are used. FAO pursues bioenergy development through sustainable small-scale livelihood-oriented bioenergy initiatives, which can provide improved access to sustainable and affordable energy services, enhance livelihoods for rural people and increase their resilience to the effects of climate change, without negative impact on food production and the environment.



Land and territories

Rights over land, territory and related natural resources are of fundamental importance to many indigenous peoples since these resources constitute the basis of their economic livelihoods and the source of their spiritual, cultural and social identities. FAO's work in this area is therefore particularly valuable. When built through participatory methods, land titling and demarcation processes, tenure security, agrarian reform and similar efforts can contribute greatly to creating a more secure and legally-defined property environment. For indigenous peoples, obtaining clear and inalienable rights over land and natural resources would support their aspirations for greater sovereignty, afford a greater sense of well-being and improve their ability to meet their livelihood needs.

Food security, nutrition and the right to food

Scientific findings show that indigenous peoples face a higher risk of food insecurity and malnutrition than other groups because they suffer from high poverty levels, decreased resource availability and growing dependence on highly processed but cheaper foods. Efforts to ensure food security and adequate nutrition are necessary to address this problem. During the World Food Summit in November 2009, FAO member states committed themselves to "actively encourage the consumption of foods, particularly those available locally, that contribute to diversified and balanced diets, as the best means of addressing micronutrient deficiencies and other forms of malnutrition, especially among vulnerable groups." Indigenous peoples have a key role to play in the promotion of sustainable diets and resilient food systems.

At the same time, indigenous peoples' 'food sovereignty' is being jeopardized by the erosion of traditional food systems. For indigenous peoples, 'food security' also denotes the right to choose the kinds of foods they wish to eat and to prepare them in accordance with traditional methods. Sustainable diets utilizing local foods conserve both ecosystems and the traditions of indigenous peoples. The right to food is therefore closely linked with the fulfilment of cultural rights and the two should be pursued jointly.

Communication and knowledge systems

Knowledge and information are fundamental in supporting livelihood security and rural development. Communication initiatives are increasingly recognized as an effective means to promote capacity development, empowerment and social change, and FAO has been active in this area for numerous decades.

Communication initiatives also foster the blending between local/indigenous knowledge and ‘technical’ information for development. Indeed, recognition of the resourcefulness of traditional agricultural knowledge systems and their complementarity with ‘scientific’ innovation systems is a growing area of interest today.

Cultural and biological diversity

The loss of future options for food security is not only a problem of conservation of species, resources or ecological systems, but is also associated with the decline of traditional agricultural practices, cultural systems and languages. Indeed, rural populations such as indigenous peoples have historically been the originators of livelihood systems that are built on an intricate awareness of the local environment and that manifest impressive levels of sustainability. The inextricable relationship between cultural and biological diversity must therefore be respected, cultivated and promoted, and the rights of indigenous peoples over their traditional knowledge and practices must be recognized and, when necessary, protected. Ensuring the dynamic conservation and promotion of traditional agricultural heritage systems is a central component of FAO’s efforts in this regard.

Economic opportunity for sustainable livelihoods

Many of the problems faced by indigenous peoples stem from being marginalized from economic, social, cultural and political processes. Providing access to markets, financial resources and stable sources of production remains a major challenge to the alleviation of poverty and food insecurity. FAO supports efforts to create enabling environments for sustainable and autonomous living through activities such as entrepreneurial training and institutional capacity development. Objectives include the generation of greater income, the diversification of livelihood options and the creation of more equitable and accessible opportunities for making a living.



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