

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE UN SYSTEM AND OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS REGARDING WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNPFII

1. At its tenth session in 2011, UNPFII will review its recommendations in relation to (a) Economic and Social Development; (b) Environment; (c) Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

(i). Please provide information on how your agency is dealing with this important issue in the seven regional areas of the Permanent Forum<sup>1</sup>.

FAO's engagement of indigenous issues has been increasing in recent years, motivated by the growing affirmation of indigenous rights around the world, and in response to strengthened commitments on the part of national authorities. Projects are implemented in many countries with which FAO has an ongoing collaboration and where indigenous communities live. As the leading agency in the field of agriculture, rural development and food security, the three issues which have been identified above are of great relevance for FAO.

Implementation of the recommendations is taken very seriously. Most of them have been taken up through the years, while others are being carried out through projects and activities that are ongoing. In fact, many activities being undertaken in fulfilment of the recommendations are viewed as a continuous process that will also require some time and organizational change.

The following section reviews FAO's response to some of the Forum's most recent recommendations. Responses are clustered around the issues specified above, and are taken from the main regions in which FAO operates. Examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but give an indication of the kind of activities and approaches which are pursued.

### a) Economic and Social Development:

FAO's work is underpinned by the complementary elements of economic and social development. Indeed, development is not sustainable if it fails to consider both dimensions of livelihood and wellbeing. This is especially true for indigenous peoples who put much emphasis on self-determination and the continuation of cultural practices and identities. Many FAO projects build on skills, knowledges and capacities which people already have and which can be the basis of greater and more secure food production and/or income-generating activity.

- Honduras: Under a three-year project entitled "Creativity and Cultural Identity for Local Development,"<sup>2</sup> FAO is collaborating with other UN agencies to promote economic opportunities based on cultural characteristics. The project has the following aims: to establish eight Regional Councils which will be responsible for local cultural development; to financially and technically support the creation of culturally-sensitive and economically-sound micro-enterprises; to restore public spaces, historical buildings and archaeological sites; and to raise awareness on the "culture and development" theme in order to integrate greater

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<sup>1</sup> UNPFII's seven socio-cultural regions are Africa; Asia; Central and South America and the Caribbean; the Arctic; Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia; North America; and the Pacific.

<sup>2</sup> MDG Achievement Fund, *Honduras: Creativity and cultural identity for local development*, <http://www.mdgfund.org/program/creativityandculturalidentitylocaldevelopment>

appreciation in public and private realms. FAO's responsibilities concentrate on supporting rural and indigenous communities in developing small business activities to sell cultural products to the tourism market. The disseminating of cultural rights, including those of indigenous and African-descended populations, is also one of the main responsibilities of the Regional Councils on Culture and Development.

- Cameroon: Within the framework of a four-year multi-partnership project entitled "mobilisation and capacity building for small and medium enterprises involved in non-wood forest products (NWFP) value chains in Central Africa", FAO trained over 5000 Baka pygmies on production and processing techniques of NWFP in the South Region of Cameroon. Over 300 bushmango (*Irvingia* spp) splitting machines were produced and distributed to village groups to facilitate what was previously a manual and risky process of cutting bushmango nuts to extract pulp. The development of a market information system also put the Baka pygmies in direct contact with the buyers of their products in towns. In contrast to individual sales, several group sales were facilitated among organised groups of Baka pygmies. These efforts led to the professionalization of the NWFP value chains among the Baka Pygmies and an overall increase in their revenue from the sale of their products by 35%.
- Thailand: FAO's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP) has been involved in supporting cooperative enterprise initiatives with indigenous Lawa and Karen women in northern Thailand. In collaboration with the Savings and Credit Union of Thailand (CULT), FAO worked with local women to establish production and marketing groups for making and selling textile products engraved with original ethnic designs. In consultation with FAO and local experts, CULT produced a handbook on small enterprises development, which is available to anyone engaged in promoting small and medium community enterprises. The handbook has been disseminated through technical training and marketing linkages provided by the CULT women's enterprise centre.

#### b) Environment

FAO is one of the leading organizations for its expertise in natural resources management, forestry, fisheries and other environmental fields. Given the inextricable relationship which exists between nature and indigenous peoples' livelihoods, FAO plays an important role in protecting the environment and those who depend on it for survival. Many FAO projects which relate to indigenous peoples and the environment do so in their promotion of biological and cultural diversity as the underpinnings of food and livelihood security *as well as* quality of life.

- GIAHS: The most exemplary of these is the ongoing GIAHS project (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems).<sup>3</sup> In 2002 FAO launched a partnership initiative on conservation and adaptive management of unique traditional agricultural systems from around the world. The Initiative aims to reinforce the underlying ecological and socio-cultural features that have sustained these systems throughout history. It works to empower farmers so that their traditional practices and associated livelihoods are not lost but rather adapt with changing physical and socio-economic circumstances. At the same time, it also works with governments to devise protective policies and incentives. Pilot sites exist in Peru, Chile, Kenya and Tanzania (where they concern indigenous peoples) as well as in China, Philippines, Tunisia, and Algeria. In the long term more GIAHS will be identified. (For more information on specific programmes see <http://www.fao.org/nr/giahs/giahs-home/en/>).

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<sup>3</sup> GIAHS are defined as "remarkable land-use systems and landscapes that are rich in globally significant biodiversity evolving from the co-adaptation of a community with its environment and its needs and aspirations for sustainable development."

### c) Free, Prior and Informed Consent

FPIC is a difficult process for all organizations, and it will also take FAO some time to integrate it effectively into its project cycle. Some important progress is being made however. Under the UNREDD programme, for instance, a National Joint Programme (NJP) was started in Bolivia in 2009. Two workshops were organized in the Amazon region to raise indigenous peoples' awareness regarding REDD. FAO supported the design stage of the NJP by contributing to the circulation of REDD information via the Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI), a programme undertaken in collaboration with CIDOB (*Confederación de Pueblos Indigenas de Bolivia*). CIDOB and FAO work together extensively to promote communication initiatives in Bolivia and Latin America more generally. Last year a letter of agreement was signed to support CIDOB's Communication for Development System as well as to document processes of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in indigenous territories.

A national workshop was held in November 2010 entitled "Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación y Desarrollo en el marco de los derechos de los PIs de Bolivia." Many indigenous organizations and government representatives were present. The main objective was to propose and approve together with indigenous peoples a Strategic Plan on Communication for Development (ComDev) for the CIDOB. There was also a space for indigenous organizations to share experiences, knowledge and progress on the use of communication, as well as to identify and develop potential strategies and partnerships with the government.

In parallel, the following activities and materials are also being developed:

- A handbook on communication and prior informed consent for forest and natural resources management;
- A documentary on the process of prior informed consent under the REDD Programme; *and*,
- Informative radio programs about Free, Prior and Informed Consent concepts and processes.

(ii). What are some of the obstacles your agency has encountered in implementing the recommendations of the Permanent Forum, including those addressed specifically to your agency?

As for all organizations, FAO faces certain obstacles and procedures which necessarily influence the nature and extent of activities. The following section summarizes the main limiting factors.

FAO's work on indigenous issues is extensive, diverse and becoming increasingly common. At the same time, the lack of an umbrella programme dedicated specifically to indigenous issues constitutes one of the greatest obstacles which characterize FAO's work at present. Activities, projects and policy work which address indigenous issues are numerous, but they are spread across the house and are not addressed in a truly systematic way. While this allows for great diversity in the nature of projects, it also means that work on indigenous issues tends to be sporadic. Rather than be mainstreamed as an integral component of FAO's work and approach, the work is for now mostly dependent on exogenous factors such as explicit government request, donor conditions, location of project, or personal knowledge of the project staff.

FAO's institutional mandate is also a concern. As a development organization, its main role is to provide expert advice and consultation. Rather than direct community

engagement, most of FAO's efforts are concentrated at national, regional and international levels. Differently from other organizations, in fact, the principal recipients of FAO's assistance are governments and other national-level institutions which seek support in devising rural development and food security programmes. This focus means that FAO does not always have the capacity to work alongside indigenous communities directly on the ground, but it does mean that efforts are made to change and improve the institutional environment in which indigenous peoples live. This means, for instance, that care is taken to include considerations for indigenous peoples in national development plans, poverty-alleviation programmes, legal frameworks, etc. As a result, both dimensions- the policy work *and* the field activities- can together yield important results.

Another key factor which influences FAO's engagement with the recommendations and indigenous peoples more generally is its nature as an inter-governmental organization. FAO is made up of governments and is directly answerable to the state representatives that sit in its governing bodies. All prospective FAO projects, activities or collaborative engagements must be endorsed a priori by the national authority of the recipient country/ies. In situations where a country is not particularly receptive to working on indigenous issues, FAO is unfortunately limited. For this reason it is fundamental that international advocacy efforts continue so as to push for important changes at the government level.

FAO is often misconceived as a funding institution; this is incorrect. FAO does not give grants or other forms of financial assistance. Support to indigenous peoples is necessarily through *technical* and *policy* assistance to governments rather than through direct financial assistance to stakeholders.

(iii). What are some of the factors that facilitate your agency's implementation of the recommendations of the Permanent Forum, including those addressed specifically to your agency?

The single greatest factor which will now facilitate work on indigenous issues is the recent adoption of the FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in August 2010 (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1857e/i1857e00.htm>). The Organization will now have to make a more concerted effort to integrate indigenous issues into its overall work.

One of the most important contributions in pushing this agenda forward has been and will continue to be the existence of external and internal pressures for change. Indigenous peoples themselves have been an important source of support, guidance and advocacy. A number of representatives have accompanied the process of developing the Policy, and have been critical voices in the request for FAO's increased dedication.

On the occasion of the Civil Society Forum which took place alongside the World Summit on Food Security (Rome, November 2009), for instance, an open dialogue was organized between indigenous representatives and FAO's inter-departmental working group. The objective of the dialogue was to discuss the content of the policy (then in draft form) and discuss possible ways of moving forward together. This kind of support and partnership is fundamental as FAO moves towards greater engagement with indigenous peoples.

Another item discussed during the Forum was the possibility on the part of indigenous representatives to form a follow-up committee for better representation and consultation with Rome-based UN bodies in the future. The beginnings of an "Indigenous Caucus" thus took form. FAO welcomed this proposal and is still keen for the caucus to become a "counterpart" structure through which partnership and dialogue can move forward. The existence of such a

body would greatly facilitate our work, but it is also important that this relationship and this body be formalized on the side of indigenous peoples. It is also essential for FAO to have a greater understanding of what such a body is and what roles and responsibilities are envisioned, especially in relation to other bodies such as the Committee on Food Security and the prospective IFAD Indigenous Peoples' Forum.

The dedication of committed members of FAO's inter-departmental working group on indigenous issues has been another critical factor in pressuring senior management to adopt a policy and to make greater efforts to abide by the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Without internal actors it is difficult for a large organization such as FAO to change its way of doing things.

A lot of work and lobbying still needs to be done to ensure that the policy is implemented. This will also depend on a vigorous campaign to change the Organization's general perception of itself as a "technical specialist" which at times discounts the need to consider the realm of the social.

A major opportunity is given by the renewal of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which has been expanded through the participation of NGO/CSO/private sector representatives in the Advisory Board and Bureau Contact Group. In this way, greater voice is given to non-governmental entities so future decisions concerning food security are not taken without considering the opinions of civil society. Such a significant restructuring of global governance was a critical step forward.

In terms of FAO itself, the best entry point for indigenous peoples into FAO meetings and processes continues to be the Civil Society liaison unit (FAO-CivilSociety@fao.org). Through this channel, indigenous representatives can acquire formal relations with the Organization and therefore take part in regular consultations.

2. Given the Forum's recommendation for the adoption of policies on indigenous peoples' issues, please specify whether your agency has:

(i). A policy or other similar tool on indigenous peoples' issues;

In August 2010, FAO adopted a corporate *Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*. A launching event was held at FAO headquarters in Rome on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2010. The policy was prepared through a collaborative and global effort involving FAO's inter-departmental working group on indigenous issues, in close consultation with indigenous representatives, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, FAO management and staff, other UN agencies, and numerous individual experts such as the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is based on international legal instruments, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and guides FAO's work where indigenous peoples are concerned.

(ii). Recent programmes on indigenous peoples' issues;

The FAO inter-departmental working group on indigenous issues- which serves as an internal forum for exchanging information and promoting increased awareness about indigenous issues within FAO- is active and meets regularly. Individual members manage or

contribute to various types of activities, which constitute the core of FAO's work on indigenous issues.

An umbrella programme does not exist, but varied efforts take place which span the four dimensions of the Organization's expertise:

- 1) Normative work (i.e. the development and implementation of norms, standards, codes of conduct, guidelines, conventions, etc.)
- 2) Policy dialogue
- 3) Field Programme
- 4) Advocacy and communication

An example from each is described below:

#### 1) Normative work

In 2001 the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) was adopted. The ITPGRFA is a binding treaty which formally recognizes the enormous contribution that local and indigenous communities and farmers of all regions, particularly those in centres of origin and crop diversity, have made and will continue to make to the conservation and development of the resources that constitute the basis of the world's food and agriculture production. The Governing Body of the International Treaty opened at the beginning of December 2008 its first Call for Proposals under a Benefit-sharing Fund which was created to financially support initiatives on conservation and sustainable use. A great variety of applicants responded: farmers and local communities, public and private institutions, gene banks, academia and research organizations, NGOs. Some examples of project proposals included strengthening local capacity for in-situ conservation; on-farm seed production of old and new crop varieties; improvement of food security of small holders farmers; and harnessing indigenous knowledge, among others. (For more information see the website at [www.planttreaty.org/](http://www.planttreaty.org/)).

#### 2) Policy dialogue

FAO has contributed to an MDG Achievement Fund project entitled "Strengthening the institutional environment for the advancement of women in Guatemala" (MDGF-1660).<sup>4</sup> This UN joint programme (which began in 2008) intends to assist and strengthen the Secretaría Presidencial de la Mujer (Presidential Secretariat for Women) and the Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena (Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women) in their efforts to institutionalise the "National Policy for the Advancement and Development of Guatemalan Women." The programme focuses on strengthening state institutions in the areas of violence against women, economic empowerment and political participation, as well as promoting the empowerment of women, adolescent girls and their organizations, for longer-term institutionalisation of the public policy.

#### 3) Field Programme

In late 2009 FAO began a reforestation programme to recuperate the forest ecosystem of the Nicaragua's Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte (RAAN) following the devastating effects of hurricane Felix in September 2007. The programme's vision is community-based and focuses on indigenous areas of the miskito and mayagna minorities. In partnership with the National Forestry Institute, FAO holds training and capacity building sessions with local

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<sup>4</sup> MDG Achievement Fund: *Strengthening the institutional environment for the advancement of women in Guatemala* (MDGF-1660)  
<http://www.mdgfund.org/program/strengtheninginstitutionalenvironmentadvancementwomenguatemala>.



communities to strengthen collective reforestation efforts, such that the gains and benefits of the programme are extended equitably and in a broad-based manner.

#### 4) Advocacy and communication

Over the last years, FAO has promoted numerous initiatives in the field of indigenous peoples' Communication for Development. These have proven to be strategic in supporting sustainable livelihoods and self-determined development. One of the main activities has been the establishment of regional participatory communication platforms of indigenous peoples, such as the *Plataforma Indigena* in Latin America ([www.plataformaindigena.org](http://www.plataformaindigena.org)) and K-Net in Canada (<http://www.knet.ca/>).

Led by CIDOB (*Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia*) and supported by FAO, the *Plataforma Indigena* aims to support indigenous peoples' self-determined development through access to a participatory platform. Within this framework, the platform constitutes a channel for exchange of knowledge, proposals and mechanisms for coordination and cooperation among different stakeholders committed to indigenous peoples' rights and concerns.

In 2009, FAO and the Italian Ministry of the Environment and Territory launched the joint Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI), which applies communication strategies and approaches to Climate Change Adaptation, sustainable Natural Resources Management (NRM) and Food Security. Working together with indigenous peoples, CSDI aims to implement communication programmes and services in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and to make suitable ComDev methods and tools available at the international level through knowledge networks and partnerships. One of the first activities is the initiative on sharing information and experience related to UNREDD in Bolivia (mentioned earlier).

#### (iii). Budgetary allocations for indigenous peoples' issues;

Budget is a major obstacle to the strengthening and mainstreaming of indigenous issues at FAO. As work is not systematic, there is no systematic allocation of resources to fund a programme nor the operations of the inter-departmental working group. The office of the focal point will develop a project proposal to submit to donors in an effort to increase the breadth and effectiveness of work.

#### (iv) Projects/activities on indigenous peoples' issues,

Projects and activities are ongoing and precede the adoption of the Policy. For some examples see the recent FAO publication "Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: Building on Biological and Cultural Diversity for Food and Livelihood Security": [www.fao.org/docrep/011/i0838e/i0838e00.htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/011/i0838e/i0838e00.htm).

The office of the focal point has recently undertaken an extensive review of FAO's field programme in the Latin America region. On the basis of this study, it is possible to estimate that FAO has undertaken roughly 130 projects related to indigenous issues between the years 2000 and 2010. Not all projects have focused and worked specifically with indigenous peoples; many are larger interventions which supported environmental, socio-economic and/or political reforms under which indigenous peoples' livelihoods and well being were one constituent of a broader project. As mentioned earlier, projects, programme and activities are indeed very diverse and span a large range of sectors, types of interventions and conditions.

The report will be made available soon, and similar reviews will also be undertaken for the Asia and Africa regions.

*(In order to facilitate the quantification of data by the Forum, please indicate the number of programmes and projects/activities devoted to indigenous peoples issues in the past year).*

3. Does your agency have regular or ad hoc capacity-building programmes on indigenous peoples' issues for staff, or a plan for capacity-building activities in this area, at headquarters or in the field?

Currently, FAO does not have a systematic programme on capacity building, hampered also by the intense reform process which is being undertaken at present. Some training sessions have been conducted in Latin America by the capacity development team within the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment division. These sessions are organized with Ministry staff and FAO regional representatives; they focus on integrating gender and social equity considerations into programmes and policy-making, including a component on indigenous issues based on the UNDG guidelines and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Draft Guidelines for FAO staff on how to integrate indigenous issues into policies, projects and programmes are being developed.

Developing FAO staff capacity on indigenous peoples' issues in general as well as in the context of FAO's normative and operational work is considered fundamental. At the same time, mainstreaming indigenous peoples' issues is also seen as a process that needs to be introduced gradually as it involves, among other things, a change of culture. Now that the Policy is in place, however, the opportunity to reinforce awareness raising, mainstreaming and training activities is stronger than before. This will be leveraged to make important progress.

4. Does your agency have a focal point on indigenous issues? If so, please provide the name and contact information of this person.

The focal point is Regina Laub (Email: [regina.laub@fao.org](mailto:regina.laub@fao.org), Telephone: +39 0657055434). However, it is not a full time position.

5. Please provide a list of conferences and other meetings organized or supported by your agency on indigenous issues for the current year as well as next year.

- Inter-Agency Support Group Meeting, WHO, Geneva, September 16-17<sup>th</sup>, 2010
- International Mountain Day 2010: Mountain Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010
- International Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and Forests, 12-14 January 2011, New York
- IFAD Workshop on "Establishing an Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD" 17-18<sup>th</sup> February 2011, Rome



- Technical workshop on *Land/territorial issues related to Indigenous Peoples*: developing a methodological approach to be used in addressing indigenous peoples' territorial issues (exact date tbd, 2011, Land and Water Division, FAO)
- Workshop to prepare the *Voluntary Guidelines (VG) to enhance responsible governance of tenure of land and other natural resources*, including Implementation Guides on Indigenous and customary tenure issues (tbd, Natural Resources Department, FAO)
- Tenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to be held from 16 to 27 May 2011
- Inter-Agency Support Group Meeting, 2011
- International conference on sustainable and customary use of biodiversity, CBD (tbd)