

# FAO POLICY ON INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES

Consistent with FAO's mandate to pursue a world free from hunger and malnutrition, and grounded in the utmost respect for universal human rights, FAO has put in place this policy to ensure that it will make all due efforts to respect, include and promote indigenous peoples' issues in its overall work. FAO is motivated to do this by the fact that indigenous communities make up a substantial portion of the world's food insecure, and by its recognition that indigenous peoples have unique skills and knowledge that may contribute to sustainable and equitable development.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework to guide FAO's work on indigenous peoples' issues. It has been developed in close consultation with representatives of indigenous peoples, FAO staff, UN agencies and numerous other partners. At the same time, its content is based on international legal instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

In accordance with international consensus, indigenous peoples are identified by the following criteria:

- 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.

## CORE PRINCIPLES

The following principles have been identified as the core rights and values to which indigenous peoples are entitled; these underlie the present policy:

- **Self-determination**
- **Development with identity**
- **Free, prior and informed consent**
- **Participation and inclusion**
- **Rights over land and other natural resources**
- **Cultural rights**
- **Collective rights**
- **Gender equality**

FAO will make every effort to comply with these principles when working with indigenous peoples.

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## OBJECTIVES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

FAO has formulated a number of objectives for increasing and improving the Organization's engagement with indigenous peoples. These are broad goals that FAO will pursue to improve the situation of indigenous peoples in line with the afore-mentioned core principles.

- 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.



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## PRIORITY AREAS OF WORK

The policy summarizes and groups indigenous peoples' priorities regarding food, agriculture and related issues into themes that correspond with FAO's main topics of work. Outlined below, these themes are derived from activities that already exist and as such offer the most feasible areas for strengthened work on indigenous peoples' issues:

- Natural resources, environment and genetic resources
- Climate change and bioenergy
- Land and territories
- Food security, nutrition and the right to food
- Communication and knowledge systems
- Cultural and biological diversity
- Economic opportunity for sustainable livelihoods

## MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE FAO POLICY ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

In order to turn these objectives into practice, the following mechanisms have been identified. They are aligned with FAO's broader Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations so as to ensure an overall complementarity between the two policies, but they also reflect the particular needs and priorities of working on indigenous peoples' issues more specifically.

### A) Information sharing and analysis

#### *A.1. Awareness-raising*

Raising awareness about the conditions in which indigenous peoples live, the development challenges they face and their aspirations for the future provides the groundwork upon which greater action and greater commitment take shape.

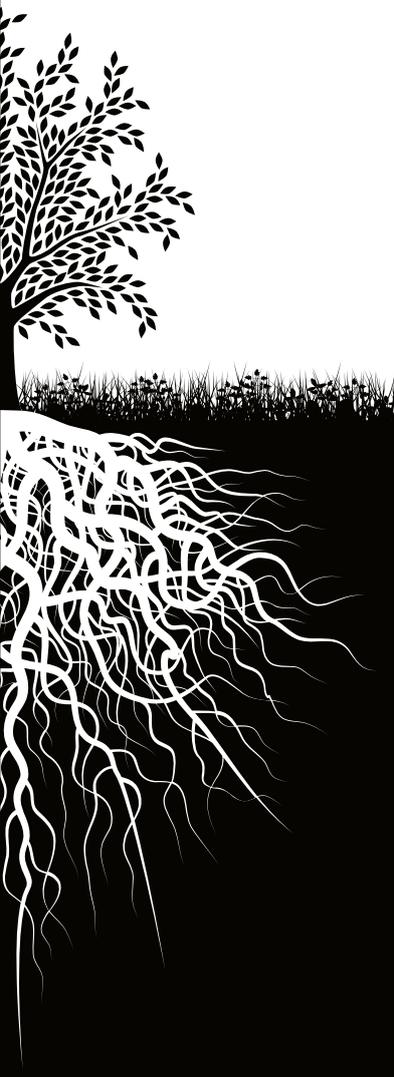
#### *A.2. Communication and data collection*

Collecting disaggregated data on ethnicity and gender and producing quantitative and 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.

#### *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 so as to better tailor development efforts.

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## **B) Policy dialogue and normative work**

### *B.1. Dialogue*

FAO will 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.

### *B.2. Participation/inclusion*

FAO will facilitate the inclusion of representatives of indigenous peoples in its consultations and programming cycles.

### *B.3. Standard-setting*

Standard-setting instruments set international benchmarks for appropriate treatment of indigenous peoples. They also constitute an effective way for indigenous peoples to lobby for their rights and needs.

## **C) Field programme**

### *C.1. Capacity development for indigenous peoples*

Capacity development for indigenous peoples is crucial to offset their vulnerabilities and increase their food and livelihood security.

### *C.2. Capacity development for FAO staff*

FAO staff need to develop practical skills to understand, consider and integrate indigenous peoples' issues into policies and programmes that affect indigenous populations.

## **D) Resource mobilization and increased coordination**

### *D.1. Collaboration in resource mobilization*

FAO will capitalize on established relations with donors, partners in the field and other international agencies in order to help channel resources to address indigenous peoples' issues as effectively as possible.

### *D.2. Coordination and cooperation within the UN system*

Increasing coordination between UN agencies will deliver a stronger and more integrated approach to indigenous peoples, their rights and their issues.

### *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.