

Indigenous peoples' collective rights to lands, territories and natural resources

Lessons from IFAD-supported projects



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“Land, territories and related resource rights are of fundamental importance to indigenous peoples since they constitute the basis of their economic livelihood and are the sources of their spiritual, cultural and social identity. Land is the foundation for the lives and cultures of indigenous peoples all over the world. Without access to, and respect of their rights over, their lands, territories and natural resources, indigenous peoples’ distinct cultures, and the possibility of determining their own development and future, become eroded.”

- Victoria Tauli Corpuz, Chairperson, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.
Address to the Opening of the Sixth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 14 May 2007

Background

It is now widely recognized that secure access to lands, territories and natural resources is fundamental to indigenous peoples’ self-driven development. Central to the identity of indigenous peoples is, in fact, their relationship to ancestral territories and related resources, which form the basis of their livelihoods and are often regulated by complex customary laws and governance systems.

Today, indigenous peoples’ rights to lands, territories and other natural resources are recognized by international laws and articulated under human rights instruments; however, despite the recognition and protection at the international level, these rights are often not respected – and are even violated – at the national level, either by States or the private sector (IWGIA, 2017b). The lack of formal State recognition of indigenous rights to their traditional territories often results in a situation of unclear and overlapping claims to lands, especially at a time when pressure on lands and resources is exacerbated by a large increase in land investments, population growth, growing demand for energy and food, and the impacts of climate change; this, in turn, constitutes one of the major drivers of conflict, instability and environmental degradation.

Situations of tenure insecurity are a driver of poverty and inequality worldwide, affecting indigenous peoples as well as other local communities: an estimated 1 to 2 billion people globally live on and use commonly held land and territories, over which they have no legal title (IFAD, 2011). In rural areas, the landless or near landless and people with insecure tenure rights typically constitute the poorest and most marginalized and vulnerable groups. In this scenario, it is not surprising that, while indigenous peoples account for a total population of about 370 million – approximately 5 per cent of the world’s total population – they comprise about 15 per cent of the world’s poor people and about one third of the world’s 900 million extremely poor rural people.¹

Land tenure

Land tenure refers to the rules, authorities, institutions, rights and norms that govern access to and control over land and related resources. It governs who can use what resources, for how long and under what conditions. In many developing countries land tenure systems have been influenced by former colonial land policies that overlaid established patterns of land distribution. Thus, many national and local systems are made up of a multiplicity of overlapping rules, laws, customs and regulations that govern how people’s rights to use, control and transfer land are exercised. (IFAD, 2008)

1 Source: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>

This is why efforts to expand and strengthen indigenous peoples' rights over their lands, territories and natural resources have become crucial to achieving the objectives of poverty reduction, more secure livelihoods, environmental sustainability and the preservation of indigenous cultural value systems. With this aim, over the past decades IFAD has worked together with indigenous peoples and their representing institutions to create enabling environments to secure their access to collective rights over ancestral territories, improve the sustainable management of indigenous lands, regulate the community use of natural resources and reduce conflicts over lands and resources.

IFAD believes that securing indigenous peoples' access to lands, territories and natural resources is fundamental to generate stability and to boost long-term, inclusive and sustainable development.

Land rights

Land rights are the rights of individuals or groups of peoples, including local communities and indigenous peoples, over land. The bundle of rights can include the rights of access, withdrawal, management, exclusion and alienation. The bundle can also include rights to various natural resources on and below the surface of the land (e.g. trees, wildlife, water, minerals). The source of these rights can be statutory law or customary law. (WRI, 2016)

Collective rights

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognizes that "indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples", creating an inextricable link between indigenous identities and their rights as peoples. The collective rights of indigenous peoples include recognition of their distinctive histories, languages, identities and cultures and the collective right to lands, territories and natural resources they have traditionally occupied and used, as well as the right to their collectively held traditional knowledge. In establishing and fulfilling collective rights for indigenous peoples, the international community has affirmed that such rights should not conflict with existing international human rights norms but complement them. For instance, the implementation of collective human rights should not adversely affect the implementation of individual rights.

Research emerging in recent decades demonstrates that lands governed under **community-based tenure systems** – i.e. the right to own or manage terrestrial natural resources held at the community level – often have well-established local institutions and practices that have historically helped to sustain fragile ecosystems, such as tropical forests, rangelands and large-scale rotational agricultural systems (RRI, 2015).

Evidence shows that the great cultural diversity of indigenous peoples coincides with rich biological diversity: globally, territories home to indigenous peoples encompass up to 22 per cent of the world's land surface and they coincide with areas that hold about 80 per cent of the planet's biodiversity (World Bank, 2008). Furthermore, indigenous peoples' natural resources management practices, selection species and agricultural techniques have contributed to shaping and protecting areas long identified as pristine wilderness, as largely documented (Ellen, Parkes and Bicker, 2000; Borrini-Feyerabend, et al., 2004; Berkes, 2008). Consequently, **it is the traditional governance systems of indigenous peoples over their territories and resources that forms the basis for their land rights.**

Over recent decades, there has been growing attention by the international community to securing formal recognition of indigenous peoples' rights to land and territories. International human rights bodies have affirmed indigenous peoples' rights as human rights under international standards, underlying indigenous peoples' collective rights to the lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally occupied, owned or used (see pages 5 and 6).

Particularly, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169, 1989) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007) enshrine the **collective land rights of indigenous peoples, stressing their inextricable link to their collective rights to self-determination and self-driven development.** These rights were reaffirmed during the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (2014), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and inscribed in the Conference's outcome document, which outlines the "indigenous peoples' right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development" (United Nations, 2014).

Recently adopted, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016) incorporates several important elements of indigenous peoples' rights in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), addressing secure land tenure as a key to poverty eradication. The 2030 Agenda also calls on indigenous peoples to actively engage in implementing the SDGs, including in follow-up and review at the national level. In response to calls from indigenous peoples' organizations and movements, many countries have also reformed their legal systems to ensure protection of indigenous peoples' territories and resources and respect for indigenous values, cultures and institutions.

Indigenous peoples' collective rights to lands, territories and resources in international instruments

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No.169), ILO, 1989. Adopted in 1989 by the General Conference of the ILO, this instrument enshrines land rights for indigenous peoples in articles 14 to 19. ILO 169 affirms that, in applying the Convention, "Governments shall respect the special importance for the cultures and spiritual values of the peoples concerned of their relationship with the lands or territories, or both as applicable, which they occupy or otherwise use, and in particular the collective aspects of this relationship."

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992. A number of legal instruments adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit, 1992), such as the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the CBD, established international legal standards to protect indigenous peoples' rights to their traditional knowledge and practices in the area of environmental management and conservation. CBD Article 8 (j) calls upon contracting parties to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, subject to national legislation, and to apply indigenous traditional knowledge, innovations and practices with the approval and involvement of the indigenous peoples concerned.²

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 2007. UNDRIP devotes several of its articles to land rights, making this an essential human rights issue for indigenous peoples. Articles 25-32 relate to lands, territories and resources. The Declaration affirms indigenous peoples' right to "maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned – or otherwise occupied and used – lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources" (Article 25); to this aim "States shall give legal recognition to these lands, territories and resources. This recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned" (Article 26).

Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). In 2012, the VGGT were officially endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security. The VGGT set out principles, technical recommendations and practices for improving the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests. This major document is the first significant worldwide instrument in the area of land governance. It strongly promotes a participatory and inclusive approach, which guarantees consultation and endorsement by all stakeholders (ILC, 2017), including indigenous peoples. The Guidelines comprise a specific section on "indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems" that need to be interpreted consistently with international law, as enshrined in UNDRIP and Convention No. 169 (<http://www.landcoalition.org/sites/default/files/documents/resources/IndigenousPeoplesRightsLandTerritoriesResources.pdf>).

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2016. The Agenda, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, stresses the need to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, ensuring that "no one is left behind", including indigenous peoples.

2 Convention on Biological Diversity, <https://www.cbd.int/convention/>

SDGs: Goal 1 aims at poverty reduction and is therefore a priority for most indigenous peoples. During the global consultation process, indigenous peoples advocated for a strong focus on secure land tenure as a key to poverty eradication: target 1.4, addressing equal rights to ownership of and control over land and natural resources, reflects indigenous peoples' concerns regarding the recognition of their collective rights on lands, territories and natural resources, and respect for their right to give or withhold their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) to projects that affect their lands and resources. Indigenous peoples' collective land rights are also addressed in targets 2.3 and 2.4, which capture land security and access through agricultural productivity. Moreover, as part of Goal 5 on gender equality, target 5.a. stresses the need to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership of and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources. Closely linked to collective rights on lands, territories and resources are also Goal 13, which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and Goal 14, addressing the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems.

Climate change policies and financing. The need to engage indigenous peoples in climate change policies and actions has been recognized by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including in the Cancun Agreement (decision 1/CP.16). The preamble of the Paris Agreement (2015) also acknowledges that Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations regarding, inter alia, the rights of indigenous peoples.

On February 2018, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board approved the **GCF's Indigenous Peoples Policy**. The Policy aims "to put in place a process and requirements for ensuring that GCF activities are developed and implemented in such a way that fosters full respect for and the active protection and promotion of indigenous peoples' dignity, rights, identities, aspirations, natural resource-based livelihoods, autonomy, protagonism and cultural uniqueness" (GCF, 2018).

IFAD and indigenous peoples' collective rights to lands, territories and resources: what we do

Policies and instruments

In the past ten years, IFAD has gone a long way in its engagement with indigenous peoples. In line with the agreements adopted at the international level for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, IFAD has established institutional instruments and participatory processes to ensure indigenous peoples' full and effective participation in its programmes and projects.

In 2009, the IFAD Executive Board approved the **Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples**. The Policy originates from consultations with representatives of indigenous peoples and benefited from contributions by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues. It is consistent with international standards, in particular the United Nations Development Group Guidelines and the UNDRIP, and it draws on IFAD's 30 years of experience in working with indigenous peoples in rural areas of developing countries.

With the aim to enhance IFAD's development effectiveness in its engagement with indigenous peoples' communities in rural areas, the Policy establishes the principles of engagement and instruments for IFAD to engage with indigenous and tribal peoples, and ethnic minorities, and it builds on promoting access to lands, territories and resources as one of its core principles.

Within this framework, IFAD promotes equitable access to lands, territories and resources by indigenous peoples and their tenure security by strengthening their own capacity to manage their territories and resources in a sustainable way. The Policy is operationalized through a variety of instruments, such as: country strategic opportunities programmes, IFAD-funded projects (loans and grants), a dedicated facility (the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility – IPAF), the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD, and a number of strategic partnerships and alliances aimed at boosting international advocacy and country policy engagement to support indigenous peoples in securing their rights.

All of IFAD’s investments (loans and grants) are designed through a participatory approach and in close collaboration with local and national authorities and based on consultations with local communities to better respond to the needs and demands of the benefiting communities. In particular, FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) is a leading principle in working with indigenous peoples, and it must be sought before any action is taken in areas that are home to indigenous peoples (IFAD, 2015). FPIC is ensured through a continuous and inclusive process of consultation and participation, which aims at building trust with the communities, their organizations and governance institutions. In its engagement, IFAD often goes beyond mere “consent” based on a “yes or no approach”, as soliciting FPIC of indigenous communities cannot be reduced to a checklist that is “ticked” as it is carried out. Instead, participation and inclusion frequently take the form of co-management, in which communities and leaders establish priorities through a demand-driven approach (IFAD, 2015).

IFAD was the first international financial institution to adopt FPIC as an operational principle in its policy documents. Policies, technical tools and procedures related to land and environment make explicit reference to indigenous peoples and, in particular, to the need to ensure that their FPIC is sought before a development intervention takes place in their areas.

The IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples led to the establishment of two new instruments to deploy its principles of engagement:

- **Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility.** A dedicated fund for indigenous peoples, IPAF was established with the objective of strengthening indigenous peoples’ communities and their organizations by financing small projects fostering their self-driven development. Since its establishment in 2006, IPAF has funded 127 small grants to indigenous peoples’ organizations: out of these, 55 projects have addressed land issues as a main topic or as part of wider project activities.
- **Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD.** In 2011, IFAD, in consultation with representatives of indigenous peoples’ organizations, established the Indigenous Peoples Forum

The **IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025** has reaffirmed IFAD’s commitment to indigenous peoples’ self-driven development and the centrality of indigenous peoples as one of the main IFAD partners and target groups. *“IFAD supports indigenous peoples’ self-driven development, while respecting and enhancing their traditional livelihoods, occupations and knowledge. IFAD’s interventions and indigenous peoples’ targeting will be improved, including through more in-depth socio-cultural and vulnerability analyses of different target groups and by integrating specific indicators on their well-being to capture impacts and results.”*

Free, Prior and Informed Consent

gives indigenous communities the power to veto projects and to negotiate under what conditions they can proceed. It requires that indigenous communities be fully informed of all project risks and impacts and that their consent be acquired before the implementation of any project. To operationalize the FPIC process on the ground, IFAD developed a How to Do Note in 2015 that outlines the general guiding principles to seek and implement FPIC throughout projects’ design and implementation stages.

The **IPAF**, through small grants of up to US\$50,000, supports projects that include indigenous peoples in development operations, improve their access to key decision-making processes and empower them to find solutions to the challenges they face. The Facility is governed by a Board formed mainly by indigenous leaders. They directly participate in the final review and approval of proposals, in accordance with the set criteria, guidelines and the IPAF review process. At the regional level, IPAF is co-managed by indigenous peoples’ organizations: Samburu Women Trust in Africa; Tebtebba Foundation in Asia; and International Indigenous Women’s Forum in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/guest/ipaf>

at IFAD, an institutionalized platform of consultation and dialogue with indigenous peoples which aims to improve IFAD's accountability towards its target groups and its development effectiveness. The Forum, as a process of dialogue, culminates in global meetings held in Rome every other year in conjunction with IFAD's Governing Council. Since 2013, three global sessions of the Forum have been held, defining biannual regional actions in which the protection of indigenous peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources and a holistic approach to development were the key recommendations at the global, regional and country levels.

Indigenous peoples' land rights were recognized and addressed in the IFAD policies on land and environmental issues. The **IFAD Policy on Improving Access to Land and Tenure Security (2008)** specifically addresses the critical need for securing access to land, intended as farmland, wetlands, pastures and forests, i.e. people's ability to control and manage their lands is key to overcoming rural poverty. The Policy recognizes that access to land and tenure security are among the main factors influencing poor rural people's livelihood potential, representing a basis of food security and income in contexts of often limited, seasonal and unstable rural labour markets. In this framework, the Fund recognizes the distinctiveness of indigenous peoples' land tenure regimes, based on collective rights to lands, territories and resources and the need to obtain FPIC.

Equality and empowerment of women and indigenous peoples in managing natural resources is also one of the core operational principles of the **IFAD Policy on Environment and Natural Resource Management (2011)**. The Policy acknowledges that the lack of clear land access and tenure rights reduces incentives to maintain natural assets. Furthermore, it outlines the link between indigenous peoples' sustainable livelihoods, climate change and the provision of environmental services.

The **Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP), 2014** provides information on assessments, measures, monitoring and compliance conducted for environment, social, climate, resettlement and indigenous peoples' issues. As part of the SECAP, an FPIC Implementation Plan needs to be prepared if the project/programme directly involves indigenous peoples. The Plan includes documentation of the consultation process leading to FPIC of the indigenous peoples' communities and any agreement resulting from the consultation and consent process for the project activities.

Operations

An analysis of IFAD's portfolio between 2012 and 2016 shows that 134 projects include tenure security measures, featuring 58 developing countries (IFAD, 2017). These 134 projects are made up of 118 loans, and 16 grant-financed projects – almost 30 per cent of all IFAD loans in the period under review. The financial investment on tenure security of these projects amounts to about US\$317 million, of which US\$177 million (56 per cent) is IFAD's direct financing, as shown in Table 1. Table 2 shows the percentage of the tenure security-allocated resources compared to the total commitment.

Out of these 134 projects, 57 (42 per cent) include indigenous peoples as part of their target groups. The analysis further shows that out of the 57 projects, about 30 (53 per cent) specifically support indigenous peoples' collective land rights from multiple perspectives.

Table 1. Budget commitment of projects implementing tenure security activities (US\$)

Financiers	Total commitment		Tenure security	
IFAD	3 078 694 348	48%	176 794 817	56%
Governments	1 132 722 334	18%	52 925 579	17%
Others	2 203 933 926	34%	86 991 709	27%
Total	6 415 350 608	100%	316 712 105	100%

Table 2. Percentage of total committed to tenure security activities

Financiers	Total commitment	Tenure security	% of total commitment
IFAD	3 078 694 348	176 794 817	5.7
Governments	1 132 722 334	52 925 579	4.7
Others	2 203 933 926	86 991 709	3.9
Total	6 415 350 608	316 712 105	4.9

The Fund supports indigenous peoples' collective rights on land, territories and resources from different and complementary perspectives. Creating an enabling environment for indigenous and tribal peoples towards **accessing collective titles** over their ancestral territories has been one of the cross-cutting activities of a range of IFAD-funded programmes, mainly in Asia and Latin America.

In **India**, land tenure issues were initially addressed by the Orissa Tribal Development Project (OTDP, 1988-1997) and successively by the Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP, 2003-2016). Both projects focused on securing land titles of tribal households through the regularization of tribal land, revitalization of traditional tenancy systems and the implementation of laws and regulations (such as the Forest Rights Act) governing access to and control over natural resources. OTELP supported securing 74 community titles under the landmark Forest Rights Act (OTELP, Project Completion Report, IFAD, 2016). Building on the achievements of OTELP and with the aim of reaching out to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs), IFAD launched a new operation in 2016, the Odisha PTGs Empowerment and Livelihoods Improvement Programme (OPELIP, 2016-2021), addressing the most marginalized and vulnerable tribes living in hilly and remote areas of the state. OPELIP will make special efforts to ensure title availability for land under cultivation by the PTGs, following the provision made under the Forest Rights Act. Furthermore, it will record community rights on forest traditionally managed by the community (OPELIP, Design Completion Report, IFAD, 2014).

Through the Rural Development Project for Ngöbe Buglé Territory and Adjoining Districts, implemented in **Panama** (1993-2001), IFAD provided economic and logistical support to the Intergovernmental Commission of the Ministry of the Interior and Justice and to the indigenous leaders involved in negotiation of the laws restoring the rights of indigenous communities over their traditional territories. To ensure informed participation in the process, the Fund also supported the dissemination of the laws. According to the constitutional chart of the *comarca* (territory), which establishes communal ownership of the territory, traditional authorities are responsible for equitable utilization of the land by its inhabitants. To strengthen community leaders' capacity to carry out this task, the project provided training in planning and administration.

PHILIPPINES

Accessing collective rights on ancestral domains

As part of its country strategy, IFAD has implemented three projects since 1997 to reduce poverty and increase the livelihoods of indigenous communities in the rural areas of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) and the Northern Mindanao. All of them had securing collective land rights at the core of their actions. The **Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP, 1997-2004)** was implemented in 82 *barangays* (small territorial and administrative units) in three provinces of the CAR, where 90 per cent of the target population is made up of indigenous peoples. The **Northern Mindanao Community Initiatives and Resource Management Project (NMCIREMP, 2003-2009)** reduced the vulnerability and enhanced the food security of low-income households in the Caraga and Northern Mindanao regions, where indigenous peoples represented the poorest and most disadvantaged social groups. Finally, the **Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP2, 2008-2019)** intends to consolidate progresses made in the first CHARMP. It operates in 170 *barangays* of 37 highland municipalities, in the six provinces where poverty is more severe (Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mountain provinces). The project targets 65,000 households, 90 per cent of which are indigenous. Due to the poverty condition of the area, and the fact that almost 95 per cent of the project's land area is considered to be ancestral domains under the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, the improvement of land tenure security is a critical aspect of CHARMP2.

All projects were designed to facilitate the issuance of certificates of ancestral domains and ancestral land titles. In the ancestral domain areas, the main focus was on supporting indigenous leaders to convert the informal land claims into formal land titles and to prepare



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some of the first Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plans (ADSDPPs) in the country. Indigenous communities in the CAR became a nationwide model for indigenous land tenure processes and practical implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act. Project implementers worked with different government agencies to harmonize policies, procedures and practices and respect indigenous traditional institutions and their process of self-determination. The projects supported legal assistance and orientation programmes on land rights and worked with indigenous peoples to identify and map the boundaries of their ancestral domains, as a condition to formulate sustainable development and protection plans.

During CHARMP implementation, land titles were issued in 14 indigenous peoples' areas; in addition, 14 ADSDPPs were formulated and adopted in the plans and programmes of the *barangay* involved. Progress made in land-titling contributed to improve the lives of indigenous peoples in the Cordillera, enhancing agroforestry management and food security. Learning from CHARMP's experience, the NMCIREM provided support to the indigenous peoples' communities that had initiated negotiations with the Government for the legal recognition of their ancestral domains. In Caraga region, NMCIREM benefited some 12,000 indigenous people from 1,600 families in nine communities, for a combined claim of about 100,000 hectares of ancestral domains (IFAD, 2009).

CHARMP2 built on the achievements and innovations of the Mindanao and first Cordillera projects, and introduced new approaches such as the development of natural resources management plans at the community level and the documentation of best practices in applying indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IFAD, 2016). In addition, the project supported the delineation of ancestral domains and the facilitation of boundary conflict resolution, along with issuance of formal land titles (Certificate of Ancestral Domain and Ancestral Land titles), with the final aim of strengthening land-use planning and improving security of tenure.

There are two main innovations introduced by the projects: the adoption of a strong participatory approach, involving indigenous peoples' institutions, and the recognition of traditional practices from the outset of project design and throughout implementation. This approach allowed investment priorities to be identified by indigenous peoples' communities, whose ownership is key to ensure the sustainability of government programmes.

Inextricably linked to securing access to and formal entitlement over their traditional lands and territories is the right to the **collective management of natural resources**, such as forests, rangelands or water sources. Over time, IFAD has partnered with indigenous peoples to improve their capacity to better manage their natural resources, experimenting with a diverse range of approaches and tools.

Implemented between 2002 and 2010, the Rural Income Diversification Project (RIDP) in Tuyen Quang Province, **Viet Nam**, targeted ethnic minority communities, with a focus on women, in the poorest upland communes of the province. Overall, out of 75,800 beneficiaries, 72 per cent belonged to ethnic minorities, and 62 per cent were women. Community forestland management was placed at the core of the project's activities (IFAD, RIDP Completion Report, 2010).

In **Peru**, over the past two decades, IFAD implemented several projects in the Southern Highlands such as the Management of Natural Resources in the Southern Highlands Project (MARENASS, 1997-2004), the Development of the Puno-Cusco Corridor Project (CORREDOR, 2000-2008) and Sierra Sur (2002-2012). Projects supported Quechua and Aymara families, focusing on improving natural resource management and valuing local knowledge and cultural assets to diversify the families' sources of income. MARENASS was the first project to introduce the "*Pacha Mama Raymi*", a highly innovative competition-based methodology to assist indigenous and local communities to mobilize funds and knowledge to manage locally developed natural resources. The process involved entire communities in a series of competitions to recover, adapt and innovate technologies for sustainable community natural resource management. The methodology was then scaled up to the other projects implemented in the *Sierra*, as well as in other IFAD-funded projects in Bolivia, Rwanda and Viet Nam.

NEPAL

Promoting community forestry management and women's empowerment through Leasehold Forest User Groups

In Nepal, most of the forests were nationalized in the late 1950s as an outcome of the democratic revolution. However, during this time, local users lacked incentives to regulate forest use; this led to increased deforestation through overgrazing and thus accelerated degradation. In the 1980s the concept of Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) was introduced. These groups are responsible for preserving the forests through a wide range of activities which link the community with the forests, timber, foliage and grass and other non-timber forest products. The community forestry policy has also shifted from a tool to improve resource management towards a more comprehensive means to achieve local livelihoods and community development (PROCASUR, 2014).

The Leasehold Forestry and Livestock Programme (LFLP) was launched in 2004 in the mid-hills areas of Nepal, where a large percentage of the population is extremely poor, giving priority to those communities living adjacent to degraded forests. Mid-hills of Nepal are home to a high number of diverse indigenous peoples, such as Chepang, Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Sunwar, Tamang, and Rai, among others (IFAD, 2012).

As a way to target the poorest community members, who were not able to access the forest through the CFUGs, LFLP developed the alternative model of Leasehold Forest User Groups (LFUGs). This consisted in providing groups of poor households with a plot of degraded



forest with a 40-year lease, renewable for an additional 40 years. LFUGs with 5 to 15 households were formed and assisted with technical support to prepare group constitutions and operational plans. District Forest Offices formally handed over the forestlands to the groups. The programme then distributed seeds and seedlings for reforesting the leased lands. Multiple trainings were organized to strengthen the technical competence and ensure sustainability of the groups.

The establishment of LFUGs had multiple benefits for indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups. It helped reduce encroachment into the forests, as the community-controlled areas became the boundary between agricultural fields and National or Community Forest User Groups. Thus, the multilayered natural forest was rehabilitated and included fodder crops, fruit orchards and vegetative ground cover. Furthermore, the LFUGs became an entry point or gateway for other development activities, receiving support from other service providers (PROCASUR, 2014).

The establishment of LFUGs was crucial to ensure both environmental protection and sustainable management of forest resources and women's empowerment at community level. Thanks to their involvement in LFUGs, women have enhanced their role in household decision-making and leadership positions. Despite their in-depth knowledge about natural resources and their key role in forest management, before joining LFUGs women did not participate in the public sphere. The diversification of economic opportunities relying on forest resources has modified the role not only of the women, but also that of *Dalits* and other marginalized groups in the area, promoting their participation in community forestry management and increasing social inclusion.

Over the past years, with the effects of climate change exacerbating the vulnerability of already fragile ecosystems, IFAD has devoted greater attention towards **enhancing the resilience of the territories and environments** in which indigenous peoples live, developing innovative adaptation measures to climate change. Since 2012, the Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP) has been channelling climate and environmental finance to enable smallholder farmers who participate in IFAD projects to enhance their resilience. Through ASAP, IFAD is systematically integrating climate resilience into IFAD's portfolio.

BOLIVIA

Integrating climate change adaptation practices into territorial planning and community natural resource management

Bolivia is one of the top eight richest countries in the world in terms of biodiversity and boasts a rich variety of knowledge and practices related to the environment. The traditional socio-ecological systems of the Bolivian valleys and highlands are the result of a millennial co-evolution and adaptation of Andean societies to their highly variable climatic environment. The most vulnerable communities are concentrated in the south-west of the country, characterized by extreme climatic conditions and an increasing aridity due to climate change that is threatening agroecosystem resilience.

To respond to climate change challenges, the **Economic Inclusion Programme for Families and Rural Communities in the Territory of the Plurinational State of Bolivia** (ACCESOS, 2013-2018) is relying on indigenous peoples' systems, while at the same time introducing new techniques compatible with local practices and building on local agrobiodiversity promotion and diversification. Through the natural resource management component, the activities promoted under ACCESOS-ASAP are based on participatory approaches. Indigenous peoples have been involved during the design phase of the project and participate in its supervision. Through community meetings, exchanges of experiences and trainings, a community identifies those practices that have higher potential to improve productivity and reduce vulnerability to climate risks, and that could be smoothly adopted and replicated.



Within ACCESOS, the talking maps are one of the instruments through which communities define their development planning. The maps are geo-referenced and include an assessment of the community's natural resources and projection of their sustainable use and climatic data. Based on the talking maps, ASAP's competition prizes (*concurros*) approach focuses on a larger territorial level. The *concurros* methodology is an innovative approach that allocates resources based on contests that facilitate poor rural people's access to quality services and their ability to become competitive entrepreneurs. Groups or communities compete for funds to invest in a range of natural resource management practices and related technical training. Each of the committees running the *concurros* has regulations approved by the local municipal council, and committee members are legitimized by the local population. The winners of a competition invest the prize funding plus a matching sum from their own resources. Their investment in and ownership of the project is a powerful factor in motivating them to maximize the impact of technical assistance, hire service providers that support their needs and achieve results. The *concurros* system proved very efficient in channelling locally available resources to motivated and organized stakeholders who acquired new knowledge and skills in several areas beyond natural resource management, such as in production, marketing and dealing with financial institutions. The combination of these activities forms a practical strategy that encourages community-based adaptation priorities to climate change in local planning, building on knowledge-sharing, sensitization and joint learning among different stakeholders (IFAD, 2016).

Another key feature of ACCESOS is the recovering of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and technologies associated with the agricultural cycle, and their integration into project activities. Among the practices based on indigenous peoples' knowledge that the project uses is an indigenous climatic information system called the *Pachagrama*. This system is a register compiled by indigenous peoples' communities that catalogues "bio-indicators" (i.e. the behaviour of plants and animals) that support management processes of agro-climatic information. The *Pachagrama* is a cost-effective and reliable system which has proved to coincide with scientific data and has helped to reduce agricultural losses. It thus constitutes a good practice for producers and decision-makers developing adaptation processes to climate change (IFAD, 2016).

Experience has also demonstrated that **stronger collective land rights can reduce conflicts and decrease investment risks.**

CHAD

Reducing conflicts to access to water through collective planning and management of territories and resources

In Chad, the **Hydraulics Pastoral Project in Sahelian Zone** (PROHYPA, 2010-2015) aimed to improve access to water for transhumant and agropastoral communities, including Mbororo Peul people. Also known as Wodaabe or Bororo, they are a subgroup of the Fulani people. They practice traditional mobile pastoralism in the Sahel region, with migrations stretching from southern Niger, through northern Nigeria, north-eastern Cameroon, south-western Chad and the western region of the Central African Republic. Overall, the project succeeded in reducing the vulnerability of approximately 240,000 people, improving their access to water sources and natural resources threatened by climate change.

In Africa, pastoral communities have long experience in developing local adaptation strategies to cope with extreme weather events such as droughts. Mobile pastoralism is a resilient livelihood system, well adapted to difficult environments. However, the current changes in climate and the subsequent impacts are severely straining the potential for adaptation of many indigenous and pastoral peoples in the region. Desertification, limitations on migration and mobility, and the destruction of biodiversity are increasing competition among different ethnic groups over scarce natural resources. In Chad, the potential of pastoral resources remains largely untapped due to an insufficient number of water points and safe crossing points for the livestock between agricultural areas. These shortcomings often force transhumant pastoralists to reduce their mobility and use the water resources of the sedentary populations, which is the cause of serious conflicts.



PROHYPA contributed to strengthening the resilience of pastoralist communities by securing pastoral mobility and enhancing productivity, recovering and improving traditional community management practices applied to hydraulic structures. To accomplish this, the project adopted conflict management tools related to access to water through the establishment of mixed commissions, in charge of preventing and/or managing conflicts between farmers and pastoralists on transhumance routes. The production of land-use maps and transhumance-routes maps, developed through a participatory process, became a key element to assist in the implementation of policies, plans and programmes of the Ministry of Rural and Urban Water to strengthen pastoral systems in Chad. The creation of new transhumance corridors also helped secure pastoral mobility, while pre-existing corridors were rehabilitated and upgraded. Corridors are currently managed by a joint committee, which is chaired by an administrative authority or by a district chief (IFAD, 2016).

PROHYPA supported the Government's policy of strengthening mobile livestock systems, making pastoralist communities the key players in the implementation of pastoral policies. In this context, mobile and transhumance pastoralist systems have proved to be highly effective in environmental, economic and social terms because of their good adaptation to fragile ecosystems. Following flexible migration patterns, these systems make the most of seasonally available natural resources and can adapt to changing environmental conditions (IFAD, 2016).

IPAF-FUNDED PROJECTS IN AFRICA

Several small projects have been recently funded by IPAF to help secure access to lands, territories and natural resources of indigenous peoples in Africa.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, between 2011 and 2013, IPAF provided financial support to the Programme for the Integration and Development of the Pygmy population in Kivu (PIDP) to support Babuluku, Bambuti and Batwa indigenous peoples to secure their traditional territories through community forestry. A participatory mapping process was undertaken to identify traditional boundaries of indigenous territories; agricultural lands, protected areas and dwelling areas were also included in the maps. In a context of general displacement of indigenous communities from the forests where they traditionally live, the maps were used to showcase community forestry management to the Ministry of Land. As a result, the Ministry asked PIDP to extend the zoning process to other indigenous and local communities.

Similarly, in **Cameroon**, the Support Centre to Women and Rural People (2015-2017) worked with Bedzang hunter-gatherer people living in the Tikar plain to improve their livelihoods by facilitating their access to land rights. Thanks to the training provided to leaders and promoters, the workshops organized on conflict management, and the facilitation offering during negotiations with neighbouring communities, Bedzang secured 248 hectares of land to undertake agroecology and agroforestry activities.



In **Tanzania**, the Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT), a non-profit environmental organization, supported the Hadzabe people to secure their land rights. The Hadzabe are a hunter-gatherer community that lives in the Lake Eyasi basin and its environs. Under the IPAF-funded project (2015-2017), UCRT worked with Hadzabe and Datoga (pastoralist) communities to secure their access to land and natural resources, with the final aim of connecting Hadzabe land across districts through to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The main innovation of this initiative was to extend Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCROs), usually issued to individuals in Tanzania, to formalize groups' rights over lands and resources, an opportunity that exists as a legal mechanism but that had not yet been piloted with indigenous peoples' communities. As a result, 12 communal CCROs were issued to communities in Lake Eyasi, securing 20,132.25 hectares for use by Hadza hunter-gatherers and Datoga pastoralists; furthermore, five villages secured land titles (PROCASUR, IFAD, 2017). This innovative initiative has been successful in reducing land-use conflicts between hunter-gatherers, pastoralists and their neighbour communities.

Innovative approaches and tools

Over time, IFAD has tested and improved its approaches and tools to work with indigenous peoples. Some of these tools have been extremely successful in assisting indigenous peoples in the legal recognition of their customary land rights and collective management of natural resources, as well as in facilitating dialogue and decision-making processes.

Free, prior and informed consent. As a good practice, it is worth mentioning the detailed FPIC Implementation Plan designed in 2016 in the frame of a new IFAD operation in Guyana, the Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Development Project. The project area is home to indigenous peoples, who are one of the main target groups of the project. The FPIC Implementation Plan resulted from intensive fieldwork in indigenous villages and consultation with local counterparts. The Plan outlined, among other issues: principles for integrating and implementing FPIC on a continuous basis; a communication strategy to facilitate dialogue between the project and the indigenous communities and to disseminate project activities through local channels using native languages; a proposal to implement a grievance management mechanism to stem the rise of potential conflicts; and an analysis of risks and respective mitigation measures. Furthermore, the FPIC Implementation Plan integrated a conceptual framework for land tenure assessment and an analysis of the land tenure and land titling situation in the project area, as prerequisites for designing future territorial development plans with the indigenous communities.

Participatory mapping. Participatory mapping has been largely employed in IFAD-funded projects to assist in resource decision-making; as a mechanism to facilitate the communication of community spatial information to project management and local government to better target development interventions; to recognize community spaces by identifying traditional lands and resources and demarcating ancestral domains; and as a mechanism to secure tenure. Participatory mapping processes have helped indigenous peoples' communities, pastoralists and forest dwellers to work towards the legal recognition of customary land rights (IFAD, 2009). Depending on the specific issue and context, the use of participatory mapping tools has varied from sketch maps, cultural or talking maps to more sophisticated geo-referenced maps.

In **Argentina**, the application of participatory mapping was successful in resolving territorial conflicts over land, water and other natural resources involving indigenous peoples' communities. Specifically, the use of participatory mapping approaches and tools contributed to providing access to land and territorial rights to Wichi and other indigenous peoples in the Chaco region of the country. In the Bolivian Chaco, participatory mapping exercises were also used by Weenhayek communities for natural resource management purposes (IFAD, FUNDAPAZ, 2018).

Learning Routes. Learning exchanges, such as the Learning Routes developed and implemented by PROCASUR,³ represent another tool that has demonstrated success in fostering the spread of good practices and innovative solutions in community natural resource management, as well as in providing a suitable platform for advocacy and networking among key stakeholders for the recognition of indigenous land rights. A Learning Route is a planned educational journey with learning objectives designed to: (i) address the knowledge needs of development practitioners who are faced with problems associated with rural poverty;

³ PROCASUR is a not-for-profit organization funded through an IFAD grant in 1996 that works on the identification, development and scaling up of innovations in the Global South.

(ii) identify local stakeholders who have tackled similar challenges successfully and innovatively, recognizing that their accumulated knowledge and experience can be useful to others; and (iii) support local organizations in the systematization of best practices in order for local stakeholders to share their knowledge.

In **Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic**, a Learning Route centred on indigenous agroforestry management practices, organized by PROCASUR Corporation and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) with IFAD support, brought together indigenous participants from the Mekong region (IFAD, 2014). The learning exchange revolved around community land titles, community forestry management and self-sufficient livelihood systems of indigenous communities. For the first time, the Learning Route brought together indigenous leaders and representatives from public institutions, such as the Ministry of Agriculture in Thailand, serving as a platform for knowledge-sharing and advocacy on sensitive issues regarding traditional systems for collective management of territories and natural resources, such as shifting cultivation practices. As result of the learning exchange and with the aim of preserving indigenous ecological knowledge and practices, the first Indigenous Community Learning Centre was financed by the Ministry of Agriculture in Northern Thailand.

Participatory methodologies to project design and implementation. These have shown to be key to ensure the development of integrated approaches to development. As the experience of several projects has demonstrated, adopting an integrated approach, involving support for improved access to land, natural resources, agricultural technologies, financial services, markets, productive and social infrastructure, and essential social services, is crucial for the sustainability of development interventions. As the experiences of IFAD projects revealed, putting indigenous and grass-roots institutions at the heart of project activities ensured ownership by community members.

What we have learned

As clearly stated by its policies and demonstrated on the ground by IFAD-funded projects over the years, securing collective access to lands, territories and natural resources is crucial to the long-term sustainability of IFAD's operations. Besides being a basic human right of the people living on those territories and relying on local resources for their livelihoods, secure collective land rights have proven to be key to economic development and a means to reduce financial risk to investments. IFAD believes that boosting an inclusive and long-term investment in rural areas is a fundamental condition to create stability. In this context, securing access to collective land rights becomes essential to reduce conflicts over lands and resources and to create the basis for sustainable development.

However, major challenges persist. Although individual land titling has been promoted in many countries, most states have been reluctant to recognize collective forms of land ownership for indigenous peoples. Legally, the situation greatly differs from one country to another, even in the same region. Thus approaches and actions aimed at securing indigenous peoples' collective rights over territories and resources need to be flexible, tailored to the specific contexts, and planned in close consultation with indigenous peoples and their institutions.

Some of the major lessons learned are as follows:

- **The recognition of indigenous peoples' collective rights on lands, territories and resources is a pathway to poverty reduction and sustainable development.**

- **The principle of FPIC must be embedded within every initiative of securing collective land rights.** All interventions affecting the lives of indigenous peoples require early and sustained input from a cross-section of groups within a community (e.g. women, youth, elders) to ensure that initiatives respond to the collective priorities, are in consonance with local culture, and reflect the entire community's development choices. In addition, FPIC must be ensured through a continuous process of consultation that starts with the design of the operation and continues throughout its implementation. IFAD's experience on the ground has shown that consultation processes leading to FPIC are essential to allow the full participation of indigenous peoples' communities in project activities, avoid potential conflicts and ensure community ownership and sustainability of the activities.
- **Securing access to and official titling of indigenous peoples' traditional territories should be sustained by complementary actions,** such as collective land-use planning and management of natural resources, a diversified range of interventions and income-generating opportunities, and capacity-building and training. Experiences in India and the Philippines have shown that these approaches are more likely to be sustainable while implemented as part of a long-term strategy.
- **Indigenous peoples' collective land rights are inseparable from their right to food,** as indigenous peoples rely on land and related resources for their food security and livelihoods. The expansion of agricultural frontiers, exploitive industries, changes in land-use management, among other activities, may pose threats to indigenous peoples' food systems and thereby undermine their right to food, as well as their food and nutrition security (FAO, 2013). In this context, IFAD has put food and nutrition security at the heart of all of its operations, promoting indigenous farming systems, encouraging an integrated approach to improving nutrition, and fostering resilience of indigenous food systems.
- **Access to information and capacity-building on collective rights to land, territories and resources must be supported,** in order for indigenous peoples to claim their rights. In fact, the challenge that indigenous peoples often face is the limited access to information on their rights, and their capacities to engage in legal processes for securing access to and titling of their traditional territories.
- **Indigenous peoples' distinctive livelihoods and traditional ecological knowledge contribute significantly to low-carbon sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and genetic diversity (AIPP, 2017).** However, climate change projects (such as biofuel production or large renewable energy projects, including hydroelectric dams) may create barriers to indigenous land ownership if implemented on indigenous territories without undertaking consultations to ensure FPIC of the communities. This is why the participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making is crucial to tackle climate change in a manner that is consistent with human rights obligations.⁴
- **IFAD's approach to ensure equal participation of both women and men in project activities at the village level has greatly improved women's participation in decision-making processes** related to collective use and management of land and resources. Experience has shown that women's active participation in community processes, such as watershed and development plans, and community and biodiversity

4 Source: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, September 2017.

maps, have highly influenced the outcomes of these processes, contributing rich knowledge which would have otherwise been missed.

- **Similarly, it is important to ensure the inclusion of indigenous youth in the process of access to and protection of collective land rights.** The use of inter-generational approaches at community level demonstrated success in engaging different generations in the collective planning of their traditional territories, fostering community cohesion and the inter-generational exchange of knowledge between elders and youth, and promoting joint learning among different stakeholders.
- During the development of the International Land Coalition's supported National Engagement Strategies regarding the land, **the establishment of collaborative multi-stakeholder platforms at the national level presents opportunities for people-centred land governance and inclusive decision-making** on issues concerning land tenure. It also gives visibility to key topics, such as the protection of indigenous peoples' rights to land and other natural resources. These platforms give stakeholders the opportunity to be sensitized to and promote the domestication of international land instruments (such as VGGT) at the local level, to be translated into national binding regulations and laws (ILC, 2017).

IFAD is the first international financial institution to adopt FPIC as an operational principle in its policy documents and to establish an Indigenous Peoples' Forum as a platform of dialogue and participation of indigenous peoples at all levels of IFAD's engagement. Today, similar instruments have been established within several other United Nations agencies and international organizations, such as: FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (2010); UNEP Policy Guidance on Indigenous Peoples (2012); UN-REDD Guidelines on Free Prior and Informed Consent (2013); UN Platform for Indigenous and Local Community Climate Action as part of the UNFCCC (2017) and, most recently, the approval of the Green Climate Fund Indigenous Peoples Policy (2018), which envisages the establishment of an indigenous peoples' advisory group.

The 2030 Agenda and its SDGs provide a renewed framework to enhance global partnerships for sustainable development and to complement actions and financial resources among different stakeholders to achieve common objectives. Therefore, the current scenario gives the momentum to establish innovative partnerships between indigenous peoples, governments, United Nations agencies and other interested partners, based on the respect for indigenous peoples' rights (see AIPP, 2017).

IFAD will continue to mainstream support to indigenous peoples throughout its investments in order for them to be part of the solution to achieving global food security, eradicating poverty and combating the effects of climate change. This will be done by increasing technical and legal support to securing indigenous peoples' collective land rights, and by promoting capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and the exchange of experiences and good practices. Direct funding to indigenous peoples' organizations through IPAF will continue to ensure support to indigenous peoples' own initiatives for collective land rights and sustainable development. At the policy level, IFAD will maintain close dialogue with national governments to facilitate the adoption of existing laws and regulations to secure the access of indigenous peoples to their rights regarding lands, territories and resources.

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International Fund for Agricultural Development
Via Paolo di Dono, 44 - 00142 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 54591 - Fax: +39 06 5043463
Email: ifad@ifad.org
www.ifad.org

 ifad-un.blogspot.com
 www.facebook.com/ifad
 [instagram.com/ifadnews](https://www.instagram.com/ifadnews)
 www.twitter.com/ifadnews
 www.youtube.com/user/ifadTV

CONTACT

Antonella Cordone
Senior Technical Specialist
Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Issues
Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division
Strategy and Knowledge Department, IFAD
Via Paolo di Dono 44, 00142 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 5459 2065
Mobile: +39 334 6337122
Email: a.cordone@ifad.org
www.ifad.org

