



International
Labour
Office

Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy

**DECENT WORK IN THE RURAL ECONOMY
POLICY GUIDANCE NOTES**

Indigenous and tribal peoples are critical agents of change for achieving sustainable development and combating climate change. They continue, however, to belong to the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups living in rural areas. Their traditional livelihood strategies, which are based on a unique relationship with their lands and natural resources, are under pressure. This results in impoverishment and increasing social, economic and environmental vulnerability as well as food insecurity. At the same time, indigenous and tribal peoples face barriers in accessing decent work opportunities because of limited access to training and skills as well as persisting discrimination and exclusion. In addition, they are exposed to exploitation and rights violations in the formal and informal economy. Along with other relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) offers a framework for promoting decent work for indigenous women and men in the rural economy, including through their consultation and participation in the development and implementation of national and local development strategies and plans. Access to decent work empowers indigenous women and men to play their role as agents of change and actors for sustainable development, as well as building peaceful and resilient societies.



1. Rationale and justification

There are an estimated 370 million women and men belonging to indigenous and tribal peoples in more than 70 countries across the globe.¹ They depend on lands and natural resources for their livelihoods and food security. For example, globally, nearly 70 million indigenous women and men are dependent on forests to meet their livelihood needs.² Indigenous peoples in rural areas are engaged in activities such as agriculture, hunting-gathering, pastoralism, fishing and the production of traditional handicrafts and goods. Indigenous peoples are immensely diverse, but they share a unique relationship with their traditional lands and natural resources, which in turn, plays a crucial role in their cultures and ways of life.

Many indigenous peoples combine their traditional occupations with alternative or complementary economic activities. In part, this reflects the fact that their traditional livelihoods have come under pressure due to various factors, including loss of their lands and the impacts of conflict and climate change. Indigenous peoples are, however, also increasingly engaging in new economic activities, for example, as entrepreneurs and innovators in the green economy³ or tourism. Here they often rely on their traditional knowledge as an important asset.⁴ Nevertheless, the contributions of indigenous peoples to the national economy and development often remains invisible because their production systems may be largely subsistence-oriented and they often work within the informal economy.

Indigenous peoples have historically suffered injustices, and persisting discrimination against them continues to be an underlying factor in their exclusion. Considerable gains have, however, been made in recent years towards ensuring respect for their rights, cultures and identities.⁵ Indigenous peoples remain among the most disadvantaged groups despite these positive developments. It is estimated that although indigenous peoples constitute about 5 per cent of the world's population, they account for 15 per cent of the

world's poor.⁶ Notably, development indicators for indigenous peoples tend to be worse than the averages for the rest of the population in several countries.⁷

A focus on indigenous peoples is included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has the ambition of ensuring that no one is left behind.⁸ In this context, the Decent Work Agenda is crucial in supporting indigenous women and men whose contributions will be essential across a range of issues. These include greening the rural economy, creating resilient rural livelihoods and jobs, enhancing food security, protecting the environment and achieving sustainable economic growth.

Although major development projects and programmes are located in rural areas, indigenous peoples often do not adequately benefit from enhanced opportunities. At the same time, they are exposed to the adverse impacts on the lands and territories that they have traditionally occupied or used, for example, due to environmental degradation or barriers to access local natural resources. Realizing the 2030 Agenda requires a specific focus on indigenous and tribal peoples in the rural economy. This requires their consultation and participation, benefit sharing with regard to development processes, and the targeted implementation and monitoring of rural development strategies, plans and programmes.

Problems that indigenous peoples face in the rural economy include land tenure insecurity, the negative impact of climate change, disregard for their rights, low skills and training, weak market linkages as well as poor access to social protection, financial services and opportunities in the formal economy. Moreover, the increasing over-exploitation of their lands by extractive activities or deforestation accelerates the degradation of their natural environment.⁹ Indigenous women, who play a crucial role in traditional livelihood practices and income generation, are exposed to discrimination from within and outside their communities, and consequently face additional socio-economic vulnerabilities. These factors have resulted in greater impoverishment among numerous indigenous women and men, many of whom have migrated away from their traditional areas to make a living in the informal economy in both rural and urban settings.

¹ UN: *State of the world's indigenous peoples* (New York, 2009).

² See *Goal 15: Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss*, UN, n.d., www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/ [accessed 16 June 2017].

³ For example in Canada, results of a survey conducted from October 2016 to February 2017 showed that 47 per cent of the 105 First Nations respondents were involved in the clean energy industry in some way – from ownership to receiving royalties. See *ILO report about indigenous peoples' role in the green economy; Canadian First Nations and clean energy*, Work and Climate Change Report, 2017, workandclimatechangereport.org/2017/05/01/ilo-report-about-first-nations-role-in-the-green-economy-b-c-first-nations-and-clean-energy/ [accessed 16 June 2017].

⁴ See, e.g. ILO: *A cooperative way for empowering indigenous peoples*, Cooperatives and the World of Work Series No. 15 (Geneva, 2016).

⁵ Key international instruments and frameworks on indigenous peoples include the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

⁶ World Bank: *Implementation of operational directive 4.20 on indigenous peoples: An independent desk review* (Washington, DC, 2003).

⁷ World Bank: *Still among the poorest of the poor*, Indigenous Peoples Country Brief (Washington, DC, 2011).

⁸ ILO: *Sustainable Development Goals: Indigenous peoples in focus* (Geneva, 2016).

⁹ ILO: *Understanding the drivers of rural vulnerability*, Employment Working Paper No. 214, Employment Policy Department, p. 24 (Geneva, 2017).

Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy

Work in these situations tends to be precarious or hazardous, with poor or no contracts as well as health and safety risks. Particularly in rural areas, indigenous peoples are increasingly seeking income from wage work (casual and seasonal), on farms and plantations or in mines, which is where several global supply chains begin. With the loss of access to lands and natural resources,

there is an additional serious threat to indigenous peoples' institutions, cultures and traditional knowledge (including the erosion of traditional knowledge among indigenous youth), that are fundamental to both combating climate change and enhancing sustainable agricultural practices, as well as the sustainable use and management of natural resources.¹⁰

2. Scope and definitions

Who are the indigenous peoples?

Indigenous and tribal peoples are found in all regions of the world, from the Arctic to tropical forests. There is no universal definition of indigenous and tribal peoples, but the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) provides a set of subjective and objective criteria, which are jointly applied to identify who these peoples are in a given country. Given the diversity of the peoples it seeks to protect, the Convention uses the inclusive

terminology of "indigenous" and "tribal" peoples and ascribes the same set of rights to both groups. For example, in some Latin American countries the term "tribal" has been applied to certain afro-descendant communities. National terms, such as *adivasis*, mountain dwellers, hill tribes or hunter-gatherers, are often used to describe indigenous and tribal peoples, and many countries have developed specific registers of these peoples.

Identifying indigenous and tribal peoples

The ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) sets out criteria for identifying the peoples concerned:

	Subjective criteria	Objective criteria
Indigenous peoples	Self-identification as belonging to an indigenous people.	<p>Descent from populations, who inhabited the country or geographical region at the time of conquest, colonisation or establishment of present state boundaries.</p> <p>They retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, irrespective of their legal status.</p>
Tribal peoples	Self-identification as belonging to a tribal people.	<p>Their social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community.</p> <p>Their status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations.</p>

Source: ILO: *Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Handbook for ILO Tripartite Constituents*, International Labour Standards Department (Geneva, 2013).

¹⁰ The 2015 Paris Agreement explicitly highlights the importance of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge in combating climate change. See Article 7 of the Agreement.

ILO's instruments on indigenous peoples

Convention No. 169 is the only international treaty on indigenous peoples open to ratification.¹¹ It represents a consensus that ILO tripartite constituents reached on indigenous peoples' rights within the nation-states in which they live and the responsibilities of governments to protect these rights. It is based on respect for indigenous peoples' cultures and ways of life, and recognizes their right to land and natural resources as well as to define their own priorities for development. It also aims to overcome discriminatory practices that affect indigenous peoples, and seeks to enable them to participate in decision-making that affects their lives.

The fundamental principles of consultation and participation constitute the cornerstone of Convention No. 169. Furthermore, it also covers a wide range of issues pertaining to indigenous peoples, such as those regarding employment and vocational training, education, health and social security, customary law and traditional institutions. The 2013 Handbook for ILO tripartite constituents provides detailed guidance on the scope of the Convention's provisions and related obligations by ratifying States.¹²

The ILO Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107) is the older ILO instrument on the issue. It is no longer open to ratification, but remains in force for several countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.¹³ The ILO has called on countries for which Convention No. 107 is still in force to consider ratifying Convention No. 169.

Policy issues

Indigenous peoples continue to face numerous difficulties in accessing decent work in the rural economy. Key policy issues in this context include the following:

Recognition, rights and inclusion in public policies: In many countries, explicit recognition of indigenous peoples in legal, policy and institutional frameworks is absent. This poses challenges for ensuring that their rights (including their rights to land and natural resources), are respected, and their socio-economic marginalization effectively tackled.¹⁴ Policies and

strategies for the rural economy need to promote partnerships and benefits sharing with indigenous peoples, for instance, with regard to tourism¹⁵ in rural areas that can benefit from the contributions of indigenous peoples. When indigenous peoples' issues and concerns are insufficiently addressed in public policies, these groups de facto remain excluded from the benefits and opportunities that these policies are meant to offer. In some instances, where public policies specifically focus on indigenous peoples, a lack of coherence with other policies, particularly with regard to natural resources management, tend to exacerbate exclusions. Furthermore, these issues are closely linked to a frequent lack of mechanisms for consultations with indigenous peoples and their participation in decision-making processes. Convention No. 169 calls for consultations, both when specific measures are taken that may directly affect indigenous peoples, as well as with regard to broader development strategy and plans. This enables them to articulate their development priorities, including those concerning their livelihood strategies and economic activities. In some countries, the disregard for indigenous peoples' rights has resulted in social strife and conflict, including in rural areas.¹⁶

Livelihoods security: Indigenous peoples are primarily dependent on lands and natural resources for their livelihoods. Amid pressures for natural resource extraction and exclusionary policies for environmental conservation, indigenous peoples increasingly face land alienation as well as restrictions on accessing natural resources or lands that they traditionally occupied.¹⁷ Along with the impacts of climate change,¹⁸ such factors are creating severe threats to their livelihoods in the rural economy, and risk exacerbating conflicts. Most importantly, these factors are rooted in the disregard for indigenous peoples' rights, exclusion in public policies and a lack of mechanisms for consultation and participation.

New opportunities in the formal economy: For many indigenous women and men, their traditional economic activities in rural areas are unable to adequately fulfil their income needs. Poor training, weak market linkages, low levels of productivity, limited access to financial and public services, land insecurity and low incentives for investments all severely

¹¹ Information on the countries that have ratified Convention No. 169 is available at the NORMLEX database at www.ilo.org/normes. As of August 2017, 22 countries have ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

¹² ILO: *Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169): Handbook for ILO tripartite constituents*, International Labour Standards Department (Geneva, 2013).

¹³ Information on the countries that have ratified Convention No. 107 is available at the NORMLEX database at www.ilo.org/normes.

¹⁴ ILO: *Indigenous peoples in the world of work: Snapshots from Asia* (Geneva, 2015).

¹⁵ ILO: *Guidelines on decent work and socially responsible tourism* (Geneva, 2017).

¹⁶ See UN: *State of the world's indigenous peoples* (New York, 2009).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ ILO: *Indigenous peoples and climate change: From victims to change agents through decent work* (Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, Green Jobs Programme, Geneva, 2017).

Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy

curtail income generation capacity. This has a significant impact on younger generations, who are not able to reap the benefits from new opportunities. The situation also undermines traditional knowledge and livelihood practices, both of which are fundamental for climate change mitigation and adaptation.¹⁹ Typically, indigenous peoples face greater barriers to entering the formal economy because of their low skills, non-recognition of traditional skills, and wider discrimination. Indigenous women,²⁰ who often simultaneously face discrimination based on their indigenous identity and gender, along with customary barriers, find it particularly difficult to access and sustain formal employment. As a result, indigenous peoples find it more difficult to diversify their economic activities, start a business or secure a steady contract. Those who do find employment often receive lower wages, have weaker contracts and face a greater likelihood of losing their job. Indigenous persons with disabilities²¹ also face discrimination with regard to formal employment. Furthermore, the intersectional realities of indigenous identity, gender and disability status further contribute to multiple forms of discrimination in the formal economy.

With increasing livelihood insecurity, poor access to social protection and limited opportunities in the formal economy, indigenous peoples have been migrating away from their traditional areas in search of income generation in the informal economy, in both rural and urban areas. In the informal economy, including work on farms and plantations or in mines, they are often exposed to violations of fundamental rights at work and unacceptable forms of work. Disproportionate instances of child labour among indigenous peoples offers an important example of the vicious cycles of exploitation and discrimination, which risk exacerbating inequalities for future generations.²²

Several challenges remain to ensuring decent work opportunities for indigenous peoples in the formal economy, but their role is critical for spurring green growth and creating jobs in the green economy. Although they make up just 5 per cent of the world's population, indigenous peoples care for

an estimated 22 per cent of the earth's surface and nearly 80 per cent of the planet's remaining biodiversity (see chart below).²³ They are already making tremendous contributions in eco-tourism, sustainably managing natural resources, and supporting resilient agricultural production, all of which is grounded in their traditional knowledge, for example, through cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations. As workers, entrepreneurs and agents of change in the rural economy, particularly through their traditional knowledge and practices,²⁴ they have the potential to make unique contributions towards green job creation, sustainable development and combating climate change.

Gender equality: Indigenous women and girls play an important role in livelihoods-related activities and unpaid care work, while sometimes simultaneously bearing the responsibility of financial, household and traditional activities. They also engage in activities such as paid domestic work, agricultural labour or the sale of handicrafts to tourists, mostly in informal settings. Indigenous women assume roles and responsibilities related to work, family and the community,²⁵ which implies that an analysis of their situation has individual and collective dimensions. They often face discrimination from within and outside their community, which creates socio-economic vulnerabilities and barriers. They tend to receive lower wages than men,²⁶ and are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Many indigenous women also face legal and customary restrictions, which limit their mobility as well as access to education and training, and consequently their ability to enter the labour force or formal economy. Moreover, in many countries, indigenous women and girls are disproportionately represented in the sex trade and among the victims of human trafficking,²⁷ which highlights the severity of the risks resulting from livelihood insecurity and poor access to social protection.

¹⁹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has noted: "Indigenous, local and traditional knowledge systems and practices, including indigenous peoples' holistic view of community and environment, are a major resource for adapting to climate change, but these have not been used consistently in existing adaptation efforts." See IPCC: *Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers* (2014).

²⁰ For instance, a study covering 11 developing countries found that the level of compliance with minimum wage laws is markedly lower, particularly for women belonging to tribal or ethnic groups, than for the workforce as a whole. See U. Rani et al.: "Minimum wage coverage and compliance in developing countries", in *International Labour Review* (2013, Vol. 152, No. 3–4).

²¹ See M.R. Velarde: *Indigenous persons with disabilities: Access to training and employment* (Geneva, ILO, Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, 2015).

²² For instance, in Viet Nam, a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey found that the percentage of child labourers among ethnic minority children compared to Kinh/Hoa children aged 5-14 years is three times higher. See GSO of Viet Nam; UNICEF; UNFPA: *Viet Nam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011: Final report* (2011).

²³ World Bank: *Implementation of operational directive 4.20 on indigenous peoples: An independent desk review* (Washington, DC, 2003) and World Bank: *Social dimensions of climate change: Workshop report 2008* (Washington, DC, 2008).

²⁴ For examples, see ILO: *Indigenous peoples and climate change: From victims to change agents through decent work* (Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, Green Jobs Programme, Geneva, 2017).

²⁵ See International Labour Conference, 106th session, Geneva, June 2017, Provisional Record No. 14, p. 3. (remarks by Myrna Cunningham, President of the Fund for Development of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean).

²⁶ For instance, in Bangladesh, a study of plain-land tribal communities found that while both women and men work as daily wage labourers, women earn much less than men. See: A. Barkat et al.: *Study on the land dispossession and alienation of Adibashis in the plain districts of Bangladesh* (Dhaka, Human Development Research Center, 2008).

²⁷ For instance, in Nepal, women and girls from indigenous communities, along with Dalit women, are reported to account for 80 per cent of the country's trafficking victims. See *7 out of every 10 victims of trafficking in person are indigenous women and girls in Nepal*, D.K. Sunuwar, 2015, www.indigenousvoice.com/en/7-out-of-every-10-victims-of-trafficking-in-person-are-indigenous-women-and-girls-in-nepal.html [accessed 16 June 2017]. Also see UNICEF; UN Women; UNFPA; ILO; OSRSG/VAC: *Breaking the silence on violence against indigenous girls, adolescents and young women: A call to action based on an overview of existing evidence from Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America* (2013).

Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy

Gender-based violence is prevalent in many rural areas, and a lack of recourse to justice or access to social services, further contribute to precarious forms of migration, which often leave many indigenous women more vulnerable to exploitation.

Furthermore, the lack of adequate infrastructure in many rural areas – such as access to water and sanitation services or to social and care services – contributes towards enhancing indigenous women’s daily workloads and serves as a major obstacle to their economic empowerment. At the same time, climate change-related resource scarcity in rural areas has particularly severe implications. For example, amid increasing water scarcity, many indigenous women are forced to walk long distances, which not only increases their workloads, but also leaves them vulnerable to sexual violence in areas distant from their villages.²⁸

Given the challenges, the economic empowerment of indigenous women is fundamental for promoting decent work in the rural economy. Collective approaches through cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations, are particularly important

because they can strengthen consultation and participation processes, and can enhance social dialogue across broader social, political and economic spheres. Such collective action can also allow for innovation that builds on traditional skills and knowledge. For example, indigenous women’s weaving cooperatives in Mexico²⁹ and in the Philippines³⁰ not only foster economic empowerment, but also assist in gaining these women political and cultural rights.

Disaggregated data: The non-recognition of indigenous peoples, a lack of directed attention, inadequate engagement with indigenous identities, and geographical remoteness have played a major role in the invisibility of indigenous peoples in the socio-economic statistical data collected and made available in several countries. The dearth of disaggregated data about indigenous peoples introduces numerous constraints for deriving an adequate understanding of poverty and socio-economic vulnerabilities in the rural economy.³¹ Data that is properly disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age, disability and other characteristics are fundamental for the informed legal and policy interventions that are necessary for breaking cycles of impoverishment and inequalities.

²⁸ See J. Carling et al.: *Asia report on climate change and indigenous peoples* (Chiang Mai, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, 2015).

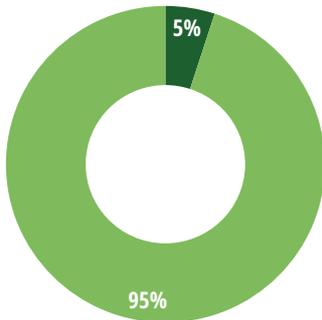
²⁹ See ILO: *Securing rights, creating jobs and ensuring sustainability: A cooperative way for empowering indigenous peoples*, Cooperatives and the World of Work Series No. 5 (Geneva, 2016).

³⁰ *The coop that helps to weave dreams*, ILO, 2012, www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_186860/lang-en/index.htm [accessed 7 Aug. 2017].

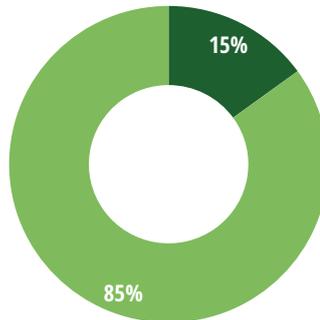
³¹ See R.K. Dhir: *Indigenous peoples in the world of work in Asia and the Pacific: A status report* (Geneva, ILO, 2015).

Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy

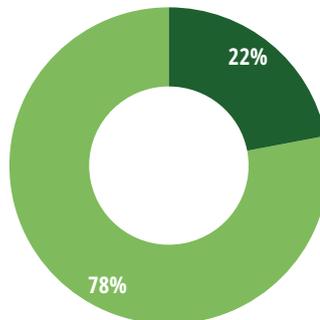
Indigenous peoples constitute about 5 per cent of the world's population...



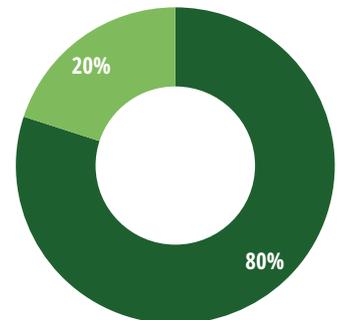
...but they account for nearly 15 per cent of the world's poor...



...yet they care for an estimated 22 per cent of the Earth's surface...



...and protect nearly 80 per cent of remaining biodiversity on the planet.



Sources: World Bank: *Implementation of operational directive 4.20 on indigenous peoples: An independent desk review* (Washington DC, 2003) and World Bank: *Social dimensions of climate change: workshop report 2008* (Washington DC, 2008).

Target groups

Ensuring decent work for indigenous peoples in the rural economy entails investing in indigenous women and men, and their communities. Indigenous peoples' representative institutions play an indispensable role in articulating their development priorities and representing their peoples in consultation processes. For securing the rights of indigenous

peoples and their inclusion in public policy and decision-making, it is, however, crucial to both sensitize and build the capacities of government institutions and officials. Alongside governments, workers' organizations, employers' organizations and businesses are essential target groups because they are key stakeholders and partners in the process of promoting both decent work and respect for indigenous peoples' rights.

3. The ILO's approach

The ILO is in a unique position within the United Nations system because it holds the institutional responsibility for Conventions Nos. 169 and 107, the only legally binding treaties specifically dedicated to indigenous peoples. As a result, it has been at the forefront of both addressing the issues that indigenous peoples face in the rural economy, and securing their rights. With an underlying concern for equality and non-discrimination guided by the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111),³² ILO's interventions regarding indigenous peoples have included:

- governance, legal and policy reforms;
- addressing violations of fundamental rights at work;
- promoting sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurship development;
- providing guidance for companies on Convention No. 169;
- strengthening access to traditional lands and natural resources;
- supporting transition to the formal economy, including through the use of cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises;
- creating inclusive social protection floors.

The ILO's Decent Work Agenda has played an important role in empowering indigenous women and men in a wide range of countries, enabling their meaningful participation in economic, social and political processes. Furthermore, grounded in the principle of social dialogue, the ILO has supported governments as well as workers', employers'

and indigenous peoples' organizations in addressing poverty among indigenous peoples as well as securing, respecting and protecting their rights. In recent years, greater attention has also been directed towards indigenous persons with disabilities.

The ILO recognizes that indigenous peoples are critical agents of change for combating climate change and realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³³ Their concerns and knowledge are fundamental for a just transition to environmental sustainability. With regard to the rural economy, indigenous peoples have a particular role to play in:

- ensuring sustainable management and use of natural resources;
- enhancing sustainable agricultural practices and food security;
- effective climate change mitigation and adaptation to build resilient communities;
- enabling greater participation of women in agriculture and natural resource management;
- enabling greater participation of women and men in infrastructure development by applying the local resource-based and rights-based approach;³⁴
- addressing rural informality by creating green jobs and sustainable forms of livelihoods;
- furthering climate-sensitive innovation, entrepreneurship and businesses based on traditional knowledge, including through cooperatives and other types of social and solidarity economy enterprises.

³² For more information, see *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)*, ILO, International Labour Conference, 42nd Session, 1958. See also ILO: *Eliminating discrimination against indigenous and tribal peoples in employment and occupation – A guide to ILO Convention No. 111* (Geneva, 2007).

³³ See ILO: *Indigenous peoples and climate change: From victims to change agents through decent work* (Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, Green Jobs Programme, Geneva, 2017).

³⁴ See ILO: *Conceptual framework for the inclusion of a rights based approach in ILO employment intensive investment programmes for indigenous and tribal peoples* (Geneva, ILO, forthcoming).

Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy

Reflecting its expertise and experience, the ILO is in a strong position to support the empowerment of indigenous women and men as well as assist its constituents and other stakeholders in implementing, monitoring and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its mandate to promote social justice, and its unique tripartite structure, enable it to harness partnerships, promote ownership and reach across local, national, regional and international levels. This is manifested in the ILO's 2015 strategy for action regarding indigenous peoples, which was designed through a consensus-driven process and has received the endorsement of its tripartite constituents.³⁵ The strategy has the following key elements:

- promoting Convention No. 169 for rights-based, inclusive and sustainable development;
- strengthening institutionalized dialogue, consultation and participation;
- improving livelihoods and working conditions;
- extending social protection;
- addressing specific challenges faced by indigenous women;
- closing the knowledge gap;
- enhancing and strengthening partnerships.

³⁵ See ILO: *Indigenous peoples' rights for inclusive and sustainable development*, Governing Body, 325th session, Geneva, 2015.

4. The ILO's experience to date

The ILO has several decades-worth of experience in addressing indigenous peoples' issues from multiple perspectives. The Decent Work Agenda has played an important role in tackling marginalization and exclusion of indigenous women and men, especially in the rural economy. Below are some recent representative examples of the ILO's interventions:

Latin America: The ILO is supporting the elaboration of laws and mechanisms on indigenous peoples' consultation and participation in a range of countries in the region, including in Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, Costa Rica and Honduras. In Nicaragua, Panama and Paraguay, within the framework of its Employment-Intensive Investment Programme, the ILO supported the implementation of water and sanitation programmes, and additionally road maintenance in Paraguay. These programmes contributed towards employment generation in indigenous communities. Studies have also been conducted on the situation of indigenous women (with a focus on rural areas), in several countries, including Peru, Costa Rica and Guatemala. Furthermore, the ILO has been providing training on indigenous peoples' rights to trade union leaders from countries across the region, and more recently, also on Convention No. 169 for employers' organizations.

Asia: The ILO has played an important role in supporting more than 100 indigenous communities in Cambodia in the field of legal recognition and process for obtaining communal land titles under the country's 2001 Land Law. In Bangladesh, the ILO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, has engaged in capacity building regarding indigenous peoples' rights for hundreds of indigenous women and men, civil society members, government officials, including army and police personnel. A major national socio-economic survey of indigenous people's households was carried out in 2016. In Nepal, which ratified Convention No. 169 as framework for peace building following a civil war, the ILO has been carrying out capacity building activities for ILO constituents, indigenous peoples and other target groups. In Viet Nam, support has been provided to indigenous peoples' community-based industries, including handicrafts production and local eco-tourism. In Indonesia, a project promoting an inclusive environmental response to climate change utilised a community-based participatory

approach, drawing on traditional knowledge and practices, consultation and participation of the communities in design and implementation of activities, and community driven decision-making involving local organizations. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, a project for poverty reduction addressed ethnic minority groups and rural women, strengthening local governments' and communities' capacities to plan, implement and monitor a process for employment promotion, which integrates different livelihood improvement and job creation strategies.

Africa: In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ILO in 2014, supported the organization of a parliamentary debate to strengthen the national legal framework on indigenous peoples' rights, which brought together representatives from indigenous peoples' and civil society organizations, members of parliament, and representatives of relevant ministries. During 2014 and 2015 in Cameroon, the ILO carried out training activities on the rights of indigenous peoples, which reached media professionals as well as young indigenous women and men. In 2014 in Namibia, the ILO strengthened the capacity of the San Council through tailored workshops to improve consultation mechanisms with regard to issues that affect indigenous communities. In Kenya, the ILO worked to reduce vulnerability to climate risks and improve livelihoods among traditional pastoralist communities through access to insurance.

Some experiences and lessons learned from ILO interventions:

- Convention No. 169 and its provisions are not well known among policy makers, economic actors, indigenous peoples and stakeholders from other target groups, despite its visibility.
- There is a need to build the capacity of state institutions for ensuring consultations with indigenous peoples in line with Convention No. 169, as well as policy coherence.
- Cultural barriers and lack of trust between indigenous peoples and other stakeholders have to be tackled as a first step towards finding common approaches and solutions.

Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy

- Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge regarding agriculture, forestry and the management of natural resources needs to be recognized and further developed for enhancing green growth in the rural economy.
- Economic, social and environmental resilience of the rural economy can be enhanced if indigenous peoples' rights regarding lands and natural resources are respected.
- Indigenous women are increasingly taking leadership roles in their communities and beyond, but they often remain excluded from participating in decision making and expressing their views.
- Indigenous peoples wish to be the actors of their own development rather than "recipients" of assistance.

5. Practical guidance and resources

Convention No. 169 provides comprehensive and specific guidance to ensure decent work for indigenous peoples in the rural economy, which is also instrumental for achieving the SDGs as well as effectively combating climate change. Key guidance from the Convention includes the following:

- Promoting, securing, protecting and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples.
- Recognizing indigenous peoples, their cultures, institutions, ways of life, traditional knowledge, livelihood practices and development priorities.
- Ensuring consultation with, and participation of indigenous peoples in all levels of decision-making that affect their life, including with regard to development priorities, as well as lands and natural resources.
- Incorporating special measures to safeguard indigenous peoples' institutions, property, cultures and environment.
- Prioritizing the improvement of indigenous peoples' conditions of life and work, levels of health and education, and the overall development of the areas that they inhabit, with their participation and cooperation.
- Safeguarding indigenous peoples' rights to the natural resources pertaining to their lands, including with regard to their right to participate in the use, management and conservation of these resources.
- Ensuring the protection of indigenous peoples with regard to recruitment and conditions of employment, including in the context of seasonal, casual and migrant indigenous workers, bonded labour and other forms of debt servitude, while also ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment for indigenous men and women, and protection from sexual harassment.
- Promoting and strengthening handicrafts, rural and community-based industries as well as traditional livelihoods activities with the participation of indigenous peoples.
- Extending social security schemes and health services, in cooperation with indigenous peoples.

Instruments

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)

Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107)

Tools

ILO. 2016. *Guides for integrated rural access planning and community contracting in the water and sanitation sector* (Geneva).

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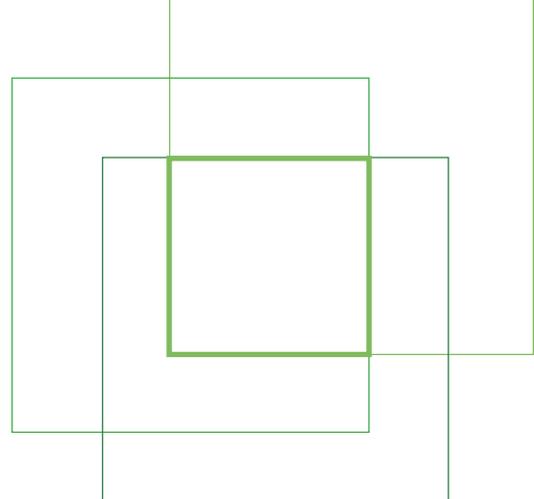
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Overview of Policy Guidance Notes on the Promotion of Decent Work in the Rural Economy



Supporting inclusive agricultural growth for improved livelihoods and food security

- Decent Work for Food Security and Resilient Rural Livelihoods
- Decent and Productive Work in Agriculture

Promoting economic diversification and triggering productive transformation for rural employment

- Economic Diversification of the Rural Economy
- Promoting Decent Work for Rural Workers at the Base of the Supply Chain
- The Role of Multinational Enterprises in the Promotion of Decent Work in Rural Areas
- Transitioning to Formality in the Rural Informal Economy
- Sustainable Tourism – A Catalyst for Inclusive Socio-economic Development and Poverty Reduction in Rural Areas

Promoting access to services, protection and employment-intensive investment

- Providing Access to Quality Services in the Rural Economy to Promote Growth and Social Development
- Extending Social Protection to the Rural Economy
- Developing the Rural Economy through Financial Inclusion: The Role of Access to Finance
- Employment-Intensive Investment in Rural Infrastructure for Economic Development, Social and Environmental Protection and Inclusive Growth

Ensuring sustainability and harnessing the benefits of natural resources

- A Just Transition towards a Resilient and Sustainable Rural Economy
- Decent Work in Forestry
- Harnessing the Potential of Extractive Industries
- Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods

Increasing the voice of rural people through organization and the promotion of rights, standards and social dialogue

- Rights at Work in the Rural Economy
- Promoting Social Dialogue in the Rural Economy
- Building Local Development in Rural Areas through Cooperatives and other Social and Solidarity Economy Enterprises and Organizations
- Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy
- Empowering Women in the Rural Economy
- Decent Work for Rural Youth
- Promoting Fair and Effective Labour Migration Policies in Agriculture and Rural Areas

Improving the knowledge base on decent work in the rural economy

- Enhancing the Knowledge Base to Support the Promotion of Decent Work in Rural Areas

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