

# RURAL DEVELOPMENT through DECENT WORK

FOR GROWTH, PRODUCTIVE JOBS, INCOME, FOOD SECURITY, GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHTS, VOICE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS RESILIENCE



International Labour Office

People

Rural Policy Briefs

## Unlocking indigenous peoples' potential for sustainable rural development

*Indigenous communities are custodians of unique knowledge, skills and production systems, which if recognised, protected, promoted and valued can become real assets to their own development and national economies, as well as address global challenges such as globalisation, rising unemployment and climate change.*

### Why action is needed

- Indigenous peoples live in extreme poverty and on the margin of societies. Their situation is a persistent reminder of historical wrongdoings that need to be addressed for social justice, good governance and development.
- The majority of indigenous peoples have lost or continue to lose their lands, and consequently their livelihoods and culture, because of historical injustices and prejudiced views, which undervalue their livelihood systems, traditional economies and customary land tenure.

### Facts and figures

- Over 370 million indigenous peoples live in more than 90 countries across all regions of the world, from the Arctic to the tropical forests.<sup>1</sup>
- Indigenous peoples constitute approximately 5 percent of the world population but count for up to 15 percent of those living in extreme poverty.<sup>2</sup>
- The ILO was the first UN agency to adopt specific international Conventions on indigenous peoples, in 1957 and 1989 respectively.
- The last 10 years have witnessed growing interest on indigenous issues, with the creation in 2000 of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII); the establishment of a Special UN Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2001; the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007; and the establishment in 2008 of the UN Human Rights Council's Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP).
- In 2008 United Nations Development Guidelines on indigenous peoples issues were adopted in order to ensure achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) among indigenous communities.



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- Indigenous peoples are often not consulted and do not participate in national decision making, which can be extremely detrimental as many policies and decisions affect them directly.
- If unaddressed indigenous peoples' issues can lead to social unrest and open conflicts. ILO Convention No. 169 and its ratification have facilitated peace processes in different countries, such as in Guatemala and Nepal.
- Indigenous peoples face barriers and disadvantages in the labour market, as their knowledge and skills are not valued and they have limited access to education and vocational training.
- The marginalization of indigenous peoples and the poverty they experience, make them particularly vulnerable to exploitative practices such as bonded labour, trafficking, discrimination at work, hazardous work and child labour, including its worst forms.
- Indigenous peoples' access to health, education and employment is limited and indicators show that their access and use of these services remain far below national averages in most countries.
- Indigenous women and children are often victims of multiple discriminations and should therefore be entitled to special measures that address their specific problems.
- Child labour, forced labour, domestic violence, displacement, sexual violence, armed conflicts, and access to resources (such as water), are some of the key areas where indigenous women and children are particularly vulnerable.
- Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge developed over centuries of living and managing fragile ecosystems, is becoming recognised as extremely pertinent to modern



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challenges, including food security, biodiversity, and climate change.

- Eco-tourism (See Box 3), forest management and conservation are emerging as potential opportunities for indigenous peoples.

## Policy options

### Enable indigenous peoples to shape their development and the future of their communities

- Ratify and implement ILO Convention No.169 and UNDRIP.
- Establish, in accordance with international standards, functional and culturally-sensitive mechanisms/institutions for full and effective consultation, participation, as well as Free Informed Consent of indigenous peoples on legislative, administrative measures and programmes which may affect them directly.
- Recognise and protect indigenous peoples' customary individual and collective rights over lands and natural resources. Develop conservation mechanisms to protect the natural resources.
- Design special mechanisms for the participation of indigenous peoples in political decision making and in institutions such as Parliaments and Governments.
- Ensure that indigenous peoples' traditional justice systems and institutions are restored, protected and provided with space, as well as resources, to operate effectively.
- Ensure that development programmes and strategies against poverty take into account indigenous peoples' aspirations, perspectives and understanding of what they would like to be or to achieve.
- Ensure that the natural resources indigenous communities depend on for their livelihoods are used sustainably and with their consent and participation.



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## Who are indigenous peoples?

There is no universal definition of indigenous and tribal peoples, as no single definition can capture their cultural diversity. The ILO Convention No. 169, and other human rights bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Inter-American Commission on human rights, enshrines the principle of self-identification by indigenous communities, listing a number of characteristics:

- Descent from populations who inhabited the country or geographical region at the time of conquest, colonization or establishment of present state boundaries
- Retention of some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, irrespective of their legal status
- Social, cultural and economic conditions distinct from other sections of the national community
- Status regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations
- Culture and traditions that have strong connection to a given land and territory

### Protect indigenous peoples' cultural dignity, identity and knowledge

- Recognise, protect and promote the traditional occupations, economies and industries of indigenous peoples.
- Take measures to increase the value and recognition of indigenous peoples' specific traditional knowledge in various domains, including medicine, handicrafts and manufacturing, to unlock their potential and contribute to their own, as well as, national development.
- Address prejudices and stereotypical views society may have about indigenous peoples' cultures, way of life, knowledge, traditions, etc., through mass media and education.

### Reducing socio-economic gaps

- Develop disaggregated data to monitor the enjoyment of all rights by indigenous peoples.
- Systematically develop sections on indigenous peoples in relevant official reports, including under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), ILO supervisory bodies, UN treaty bodies, climate change, MDGs and similar relevant processes.
- Undertake thorough reviews of existing laws, policies and programmes to align them with standards on indigenous peoples' rights, notably ILO Convention No.169 and UNDRIP.
- Adopt practical guidelines on indigenous peoples' issues for the private sector and similar key actors.
- Raise awareness about the abilities of indigenous peoples and their contribution to national development.
- Include indigenous peoples in the very processes of designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating special programmes aimed at lessening their disproportionate inaccessibility to public services, such as education, employment, health facilities, vocational training and markets.
- Target indigenous women and children in support programmes and facilitate their access to necessary services as they are the most vulnerable.
- Develop special programmes for indigenous teachers, health workers, entrepreneurs, trainers, etc., to increase their job opportunities.



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## ILO's role

- The situation of indigenous peoples has been a key concern and area of work for the ILO since its founding.
- ILO first addressed indigenous peoples' issues to respond to their dire working conditions, leading to the adoption of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).
- Later work acknowledged and addressed the particularly discriminatory working conditions for indigenous peoples, recognized as consequences of historical and social injustices deeply rooted in prejudice, as indigenous peoples were not entitled to basic rights and freedoms, such as property rights and cultural identity.
- The ILO also led a multi-agency "Programme of Technical Assistance to the Indigenous Populations of the Andean High Plateau" (1954-1972) covering eight countries that introduced modern practices and techniques related to agriculture and cattle-raising, housing, health, education, training for employment-creation activities, cooperatives, etc., as well as an integrated approach to improve indigenous peoples' working and living conditions, based on the support of indigenous populations and their specific needs.

## Box 2

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

Adopted in revision of Convention 107, which was criticised for its integrationist approach, ILO Convention No. 169:

- Covers a wide range of rights, including land rights, access to natural resources, health, education, vocational training, conditions of employment and contacts across borders
- Has as a fundamental implementation principle, Consultation and Participation: the right of indigenous and tribal peoples to be consulted, and to participate in policy, legislative, administrative and development processes affecting them
- Has been ratified by 22 countries to date

Convention No. 169 is a tool for good governance, conflict resolution and reconciliation of diverse interests for sustainable and participatory development.

## Box 3

### Redturs

The Redturs network of Latin American indigenous rural communities promotes tourism-led development based on the active inclusion and sovereignty of these communities in decision making. The programme actively ensures that indigenous people are at the centre in decisions regarding the nature, extent, and speed of touristic endeavours. Launched in 2000, Redturs now has programmes in 14 Latin American countries. It effectively connects rural areas and indigenous communities to modern economic trends, advanced technology, and market opportunities, operating on the principle of respecting cultural heritage and knowledge of indigenous populations and communities.

ILO provides business development, training to local communities, marketing tools and improves information sharing between the 14 participating countries and the international community at large. It also contributed to the development of the "Portal of Living Cultures", an online tourist search engine promoting over 200 community tourist destinations in Latin America.

Source: <http://www.redturs.org/>

## Box 4

### Promoting and Implementing the Rights of the San indigenous Peoples of Namibia

Since 2009 a Spanish-funded ILO project is supporting the Namibian Government's San Development Programme by strengthening the planning and coordination capacity of policy makers and key relevant line ministries; while supporting San women, men and youth in Namibia through rights awareness, improved networking and knowledge sharing. It provides specific support to the San Division, established within the Deputy Prime Minister's Office and is implementing numerous indigenous-focussed programmes, including the development of a regulatory framework on indigenous communities, taken as commitment by the Namibian Government under the Universal Periodic Review process. In particular, ILO:

- Provides capacity building through training workshops for government officials and other relevant stakeholders to ensure consultation and participation of indigenous peoples in government development programmes, including working with the Ministry of Land Issues on the implementation of a land redistribution programme
- Helps develop multiple tools to facilitate the incorporation of cultural sensitivity, traditional knowledge networks etc., into national development programmes
- Helps facilitate and support government planning in addressing indigenous peoples' issues and facilitate coordination of activities among all stakeholders to ensure that interventions, such as resettlement programmes and vocational trainings, will benefit the San peoples to the extent possible
- Supports and provides training to representatives of the San peoples to raise awareness of indigenous peoples' rights and increase their capacity to interact with other relevant stakeholders and actively participate in their development

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- ILO currently operates one of the largest UN programmes on indigenous peoples called, PRO 169 (Programme to Promote ILO Convention No. 169), working on indigenous peoples' rights in more than 22 countries and reaching some 50 million indigenous peoples across Latin America, Asia and Africa. Its two-pronged strategy:
  - ◆ Promotes the development and implementation of legislation, policies and programmes that respect and put into practice the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples; and
  - ◆ Builds the capacity of governments, civil society and other actors to address issues affecting indigenous peoples.
- ILO works through training programmes for governments, workers' and employers' organizations, as well as indigenous peoples.
- At the policy level, ILO provides supportive processes for legal and constitutional recognition of indigenous peoples.
- ILO also develops public awareness and capacity development tools, such as guides to conventions, toolkits, training modules and videos that are made available online for a wide and diversified range of users.

## Links

- Programme to Promote ILO Convention No. 169 (PRO 169): <http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Aboutus/PRO169/lang--en/index.htm>
- PRO 169 Training Toolbox on Indigenous Peoples' Rights: <http://pro169.org/>

## Tools

- ◆ ILO: Indigenous and Tribal People's Rights in Practice: A Guide to ILO Convention No. 169 (Geneva: 2009): [http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Resources/Guidelinesandmanuals/lang--en/docName--WCMS\\_106474/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Resources/Guidelinesandmanuals/lang--en/docName--WCMS_106474/index.htm)
- ◆ ILO: Manual on Convention 169 (Geneva: 2003): <http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Conventions/no169/lang--fr/index.htm>
- ◆ ILO: A Guide to ILO Convention No. 111: Eliminating Discrimination Against Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Employment and Occupation (Geneva: 2007): [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_norm/@normes/documents/publication/wcms\\_097727.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@normes/documents/publication/wcms_097727.pdf)

## Box 5

### Empowering Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia

Since 2005, ILO has been working with the Government and indigenous peoples' organizations in Cambodia to ensure the long-term empowerment of indigenous communities by protecting their collective rights to land within the framework of a DANIDA-funded project.

ILO's work in this connection is two-fold:

- Support the implementation of the Land Law and the Forestry Law, providing assistance and capacity-building to public officials and indigenous communities throughout the three steps involved in the process leading to land titling (community identification, legal registration, and application for collective land title established under the Land Law of 2001 and related implementing regulations). Thus far, 36 communities have successfully been identified, and 20 have been registered as legal entities and are now working towards collective land titling
- Promote Local Economic Development initiatives in registered communities providing basic training, skills, and support to indigenous communities to design and implement community development plans and strengthen their livelihoods

Source:  
[http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/projects/lang--en/WCMS\\_099760/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/projects/lang--en/WCMS_099760/index.htm)

- In 2010, ILO played a leading role in the establishment of a first global inter-agency initiative on indigenous peoples between itself, the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA. The ILO currently hosts its Technical Secretariat.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations: State of the World's indigenous peoples, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) (New York: 2009), Available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/sowip.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- ◆ ILO: Including Indigenous Peoples in Poverty Reduction Strategies: A Practice Guide Based on Experiences from Cambodia, Cameroon and Nepal (Geneva: 2008): [http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Resources/Publications/lang--en/docName--WCMS\\_100517/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Resources/Publications/lang--en/docName--WCMS_100517/index.htm)

## Other Materials:

- ◆ ILO: Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: An Ethnic Audit of Selected Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (Geneva: 2005)

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