

# THE **INDIGENOUS** WORLD **2021**



# The Indigenous World 2021

35<sup>th</sup> Edition .....

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**Cover photograph:** The Indigenous community of Kawemhakan, Suriname, blocked its airstrip to prevent outsiders from arriving into their villages and bringing the virus with them. **Photo credit:** Mulokot Foundation/ Kawemhakan

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# The Indigenous Navigator: Self-Determined Development

The Indigenous Navigator is an online portal providing access to a set of tools developed for and by Indigenous Peoples. By using the Indigenous Navigator, Indigenous organisations and communities, duty bearers, NGOs and journalists can access free tools and resources based on updated community-generated data. By documenting and reporting their own situations, Indigenous Peoples can enhance their access to justice and development and help document the situation of Indigenous people globally.

Through the Indigenous Navigator framework, data is collected that can be used by Indigenous people to advocate for their rights and to systematically monitor the level of recognition and implementation of these rights. The Indigenous Navigator framework encompasses over 150 structure, process and impact indicators to monitor central aspects of Indigenous Peoples' civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), ILO Convention 169 (ILO169) and other relevant human rights instruments. In addition, the framework enables monitoring of the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Indigenous Navigator Initiative (INI), begun in 2014, has been developed and carried forward by a consortium consisting of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), the Tebtebba Foundation – Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education (TEBTEBBA), The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This consortium works in partnership with the European Commission.

## Indigenous-led, by and for Indigenous Peoples

**W**ith its rights-based approach, the tools of the Indigenous Navigator (IN) allow Indigenous communities to document their situation in a way that is easily communicable to authorities and development actors. The standardised indicators make it possible to compare results across sectors, communities, countries and continents. It also enables longitudinal comparison over time to measure progress and identify major implementation gaps. This data strengthens the position of Indigenous communities as they engage with civic, state and global entities to claim their rights.<sup>1</sup>

The IN was launched in 2014.<sup>2</sup> As the initiative has developed, there have been consistent upgrades and revisions to ensure that the framework and tools meet the needs and expectations of the Indigenous communities which are implementing them. Over the last year (2020), the consortium has embarked on an ambitious program to upgrade and revise the IN's framework and tools, and particularly to rebuild its website and data portal. While this work has been in progress, the INI has continued supporting community-led projects through its small grants facility. These projects are based on the data collected and complement the actions and strategies that have been developed together with Indigenous Peoples and their communities. They act as a direct action on the needs expressed and enhance these communities' ability to claim their rights.

The IN is being implemented in 11 countries (2020): Latin America: Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Suriname; Asia: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and the Philippines; and in Africa: Cameroon, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania.<sup>3</sup> In addition, national partners and Indigenous Peoples organisations in Myanmar, Norway, Sweden, and Finland have submitted proposals to expand the Indigenous Navigator's implementation to their communities in 2021.

### A growing impact

AAs reported in *The Indigenous World 2020*, a total of 165 (Community-150/National-15) questionnaires were completed and entered into

the global portal.<sup>4</sup> These questionnaires are the result of the engagement of over 200 communities in the data-gathering and analysis process. In addition, four national surveys were updated giving comparative data for change over time. The scale of population coverage among the 150 community surveys has been particularly striking, covering a population of over 280,000 people by the end of 2020.

Further the IN's framework, tools, data collection and subsequent discussions on the results from the questionnaires are a new and innovative participatory problem identification process for Indigenous communities. Alongside the identification of issues and sensitisation on rights, results often serve to confirm the experiences and observations of the local communities and allow them to visualise and communicate their issues in a tangible and quantifiable manner. This process has resulted in the development of 57 data-driven pilot projects and are currently in progress. These pilot projects, which are led and carried out by Indigenous communities, promote innovative solutions to urgent issues in the local context, taking into account Indigenous peoples' own values, worldview, economies and life plans. Peoples' commitment and ownership create a solid base to make these projects sustainable.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a critical effect on the initiative, Indigenous Peoples, and the communities it serves. Nationwide, preventative efforts to control the spread of the pandemic, including lockdowns, limitations on inter-regional and international travel, and the implementation of Indigenous Peoples' own protocols and efforts to contain and isolate themselves delayed the implementation of data collection, advocacy and the small grants facility's activities. Further, to ensure vulnerable communities and leaders were empowered to protect themselves and face the pandemic, restrictions on mass gatherings and domestic travel were adhered to and enhanced, changing plans for training workshops, dialogue meetings, monitoring visits and field activities. The IN's framework and tools provided partners with resources and flexibility to address this crisis, ensuring support for the provision of emergency responses, the adjustment of work plans and timelines, and the altering of activities to respond to urgent needs.

In Peru, the national partners and representatives from Indigenous organisations and communities persevered in demanding their right to access health care services, as well as to effectively participate in the planning and provision processes of such services, and to be included

in the pandemic's response and recovery activities.

Despite the challenges, the consortium partners, along with their national counterparts and Indigenous communities, achieved considerable progress in the implementation of the Indigenous Navigator, which has been instrumental in responding to the immediate and long-term needs of these communities in times of the sanitary, economic and political crisis.

In Nepal, for example, six Indigenous communities have actively used their advocacy skills, enhanced by their experience with the Indigenous Navigator, to have constructive dialogues with local and provincial governments regarding access to public funds, social services and protections, which in turn committed to co-finance the communities' proposals for their self-determined development.

In Suriname, a multi-regional communication project was developed in response to the change in circumstances and context due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on addressing the weaknesses of the internal and external communication system. In the specific case of COVID-19, this will be important for the Indigenous communities to take well-informed decisions to decide or demand the necessary measures to protect them against contamination and increase their access to equal quality healthcare and information availability and sharing.

In Cameroon, the pilot project focuses on assisting Indigenous forest peoples with accessing citizenship documents to improve their participation in many aspects of public life. Through this project 598 people will receive their birth certificates, which will enable them to enrol in school, move freely around the country, vote, initiate legal procedures, apply for jobs, and perform many other essential life activities. This project, along with the associated advocacy work with local governments and judiciaries, will open the door for Indigenous youth to access basic state services throughout their lifetimes.

In addition to those concrete outcomes, the small-scale pilot projects also had a significant and unforeseen impact at the local level across all three continents. Community members report that they are fostering solid collaboration within communities, restoring their sense of community and revitalising their identities and cultures, renewing collective efforts to achieve their own goals, enhancing Indigenous youth's capacities to lead and advocate for their rights, or receiving SDG awards for their work, as in Kenya.<sup>5</sup> As Indigenous communities

continue to become more aware of their rights, they are now also better equipped to use their data as advocacy tools, which is guiding them to plan their future.

In all, the project has reached 280 Indigenous communities in 2019 and 2020 through the small grants facility and enabled 150 Indigenous communities to prepare concrete proposals during 2018-2020. In Bolivia, 42 Indigenous communities jointly developed four proposals, while in Peru 40 Indigenous communities worked together to develop six proposals. In Colombia, four Indigenous communities prepared five grant proposals, and in Suriname, four Indigenous communities submitted five proposals, including one multi-regional project involving 52 villages across six regions.

On the African continent, 15 Indigenous communities in Cameroon developed two proposals, while in Kenya, six Indigenous communities developed six proposals. Five Indigenous communities in Tanzania submitted four proposals.

In the Asia/Pacific region 11 Indigenous communities submitted six proposals in the Philippines. In Bangladesh, nine Indigenous communities submitted 10 grant proposals. Notably, the partnership with the Bangladesh Indigenous Women's Network, which is working at the national level, covers an additional 20 Indigenous communities. In Cambodia, four communities developed four proposals, while in Nepal, six communities developed six proposals. These communities translate to approximately 156,993 Indigenous people who are expected to benefit from their implementation. Together, these 57 projects address all 17 SDGs.

Alongside the development and implementation of these project proposals, 367 representatives from target groups have been trained in their rights, the SDGs and other relevant public policies and budgets, monitoring and advocacy skills as a result of the IN's implementation.

## **From local to global**

At the country level, building on the data gathered through the surveys, the consortium has produced several knowledge products and regularly engages in direct dialogues and alliance-building activities.<sup>6</sup>

In June-August 2020, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and IWGIA conducted a series of consultations, surveys and interviews with IN consortium members, coordinators and the national partner organisations involved in the implementation of the INI's various components. These conversations, in addition to data gathered through community questionnaires, facilitated the elaboration of a series of global reports.

Provision of data for reports and briefings to support Indigenous Peoples' participation at global and local events have supported partners to engage with the SDG Agenda more directly at an international level despite the critical challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Presentation of the IN framework and results, as well as advocacy for Indigenous Peoples' rights have continued.<sup>7</sup>

Five global reports have been made available: Implementing the Indigenous Navigator: Experiences around the globe,<sup>8</sup> The impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous communities – Insights from the Indigenous Navigator,<sup>9</sup> Indigenous Women's realities – Insights from the Indigenous Navigator,<sup>10</sup> Dialogue and Self-determination through the Indigenous Navigator,<sup>11</sup> and Indigenous Peoples in a changing world of work: Exploring the labour dimension of Indigenous Peoples' situation through the Indigenous Navigator.<sup>12</sup>

The IN has been recognised as one of 16 success stories in SDG Good Practices: A compilation of success stories and lessons learned in SDG implementation practices for the achievement of the SDGs.<sup>13</sup>

The consortium also made two submissions to the Human Rights Council's 3<sup>rd</sup> inter-sessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on the topic of Building Back Better: Integrating Human Rights in Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup>

In 2020, Indigenous partners in Peru submitted a shadow report to the High-Level Political Forum and issued a national report on the SDGs utilising IN data. These products help to concretise the communities' experiences and feed into both regional and global knowledge products that serve to inform policy makers and duty bearers. The results captured by the community and national surveys inform policy and advocacy documents and complement efforts and reports produced through the contributions of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IPMG)<sup>15</sup> at the global level, for example at the High-Level Political Forum.<sup>16</sup>



The country-level and global level knowledge products, through their findings, continue to contribute to ensuring the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in the development, implementation, monitoring and review processes of policies and development initiatives at all levels.

## **Responding to COVID-19**

Indigenous Peoples today, in all parts of the world, are still fighting discrimination and targeted violence, struggling against a shrinking civic space, lacking recognition of their rights as peoples, and suffering from land dispossession, evictions and the negative consequences of climate change and conservation efforts. Indigenous Peoples are also disproportionately suffering the effects of COVID-19 and its consequences, including increased repression by states that are using the pandemic as a way to enact laws that further encroach on their rights. For Indigenous Peoples, the long-term consequences of the pandemic may be devastating.<sup>17</sup>

On the basis of a collaborative, community-led data-gathering effort and testimonies from Indigenous communities, the IN worked to provide first-hand information on the situation of Indigenous Peoples in the 11 countries where communities have participated in data collection, advocacy and project implementation.<sup>18</sup> A critical finding has been the differentiated impact that COVID-19 is having on Indigenous Peoples, which also varies from community to community. The data and interviews conducted in 2020 identify how pre-existing barriers in access to health, social security and education are fuelling disproportional impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous Peoples. It has also indicated a rise in food insecurity, related to loss of livelihoods and lack of access to land and natural resources. Despite these critical challenges, the findings have also underlined the vital role played by Indigenous communities in building the response and recovery to the global COVID-19 crisis resulting from the pandemic.

The analysis and recommendations presented from these findings seek to contribute to the design of COVID-19 response and recovery measures that are respectful of Indigenous Peoples' rights and support

their livelihoods, economies and resilience. Firstly, efforts should be increased to provide Indigenous communities with the necessary means of prevention in relation to COVID-19, including preventive mechanisms, access to adequately equipped and culturally appropriate healthcare facilities, and information in Indigenous languages. Secondly, inclusive and community-based assessments of risks and needs should be undertaken in order to understand the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples. State institutions in charge of Indigenous issues should be strengthened, including mechanisms for the participation of, and consultation with, Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples' participation in the management of health and educational services, including the return to school, should also be ensured and distance learning opportunities provided. Furthermore, measures for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' lands and access to natural resources which are essential for their traditional activities are urgently needed. Indigenous entrepreneurial initiatives should be maintained and promoted, and Indigenous Peoples' livelihoods and local economies should be strengthened in order to ensure the sustainability of their communities. Lastly, Indigenous Peoples' labour rights must be ensured at all stages of crisis response and recovery measures.

The Indigenous Navigator's local partners have also developed their resilience capacities and worked to find ways to support Indigenous communities, while providing them with logistical and technical support to cope with the crisis. In the Philippines, communities are building on previous experiences of crisis (e.g., droughts and rat infestation) and increasingly retrieving traditional seeds and crops, as well as rejuvenating traditional food production systems, as they have realised that reverting to their food production systems and practices makes the community more resilient. In Tanzania, for instance, the Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisation's Forum (PINGO's Forum), in collaboration with community health workers, has trained Indigenous community members in the use of sanitation supplies. In Peru, the National Organization of Indigenous Women has embarked on awareness-raising campaigns relating to the risks associated with COVID-19 in Indigenous communities, including through community radio. In Colombia, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) has been working on monitoring cases of COVID-19 infections

within Indigenous territories. In Cameroon, the Indigenous Baka-led Association Okani has provided sanitation supplies and awareness-raising on COVID-19 to 50 Indigenous communities, including developing awareness-raising materials in Indigenous languages for local radio stations.

In various instances, local partners have emphasised that COVID-19 responses proposed and implemented by governments are often blind to local realities and therefore rejected by Indigenous groups. Similarly, a partner from Asia highlighted that Indigenous communities and organisations hold knowledge that would be essential in the design of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By conducting data collection under the Indigenous Navigator initiative, for example, many communities gathered relevant information in order to diagnose which communities are in a situation of greater vulnerability.

## **Using data to promote, protect and defend Indigenous Peoples rights**

The importance of the INI, as well as some preliminary findings from the data gathered, continue to be highlighted across local, national and international levels, with several Indigenous organisations and communities, governmental actors, civil society groups, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)<sup>19</sup> and international organisations or development actors showing enthusiasm, support and interest towards this unique initiative.

The growing interest among national statistical agencies<sup>20</sup> regarding data on Indigenous Peoples is a testament to successes in dialogues and outreach at national levels. For instance, in Bangladesh and Tanzania, engagements with statistical institutions as well as other government institutions continue to be enhanced at the country level. In the Philippines, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Suriname, dialogues have been established with relevant institutions on Indigenous data generation, management and disaggregation to ensure that Indigenous Peoples data is captured. Further, the IN consortium has reached out to the Global Indigenous Data Alliance and the Inclusive Data Charter to explore partnerships regarding better data practices in regard to Indigenous Peoples.

## Continued commitment, a valued tool

The report *Implementing the Indigenous Navigator: Experiences Around the Globe*<sup>21</sup> gave space to Indigenous voices from the front line who are implementing the IN's tools and frameworks. In their own words and through their experience, partners in all 11 countries noted not only the critical relevance of the IN, but also the tremendous and unique level of ownership among the partners and beneficiaries. Coordinators at the national level also shared reflections on research fatigue, the impact of rights sensitisation and the essential need to scale up implementation of the initiative. Powerfully, these voices share the unique position that the data collected and the resulting products are based on the reality and issues they experience in their everyday life. In some cases, communities note that the IN has been the first opportunity they have had to interact with and learn about their rights. It has also been unique in that the pilot projects are often the first chance these communities have had to design a project based on the issues they have prioritised and on their proposed actions to address these.

The national partners, as well as the beneficiary communities, have proven, and continue to prove, their engagement and commitment to the IN as a valued tool to realise their rights by promoting it and submitting applications to expand their work and its coverage. National partners have organised and conducted planned events and activities that have performed beyond expectations given the local contexts and the catastrophic impacts of COVID-19. They are also continuously supporting the communities who have shown their enhanced capacity to develop grant proposals, manage the implementation of pilot projects and strengthen their demands, describe their internal strategies, and engage with local municipal authorities alongside their visions for their own development.

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14. The joint submission can be found here: <https://Indigenousnavigator.org/news/joint-submission-to-the-hrcs-3rd-intersessional-meeting>.
15. The Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IPMG) is an initiative to ensure full participation and representation of Indigenous Peoples’ rights as affirmed by the UNDRIP. The focus of the IPMG is on global engagements relating to sustainable development, however it also endeavours to generate all forms of solidarity support and assistance for Indigenous Peoples at the national level in relation to sustainable development. These include awareness-raising, capacity building, support for lobby, advocacy and community mobilisations, among others. <https://www.Indigenouspeoples-sdg.org/index.php/english/>
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19. Op Cit. 1
20. Sometimes referred to as “official data sources” as they are linked to government.
21. Op Cit. 7

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**The compilation you have in your hands is the unique result of a collaborative effort between Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists and scholars who voluntarily document and report on the situation of Indigenous Peoples' rights. We thank them and celebrate the bonds and sense of community that result from the close cooperation needed to make this one-of-a kind documentation tool available.**

For 35 consecutive years IWGIA has published *The Indigenous World* in collaboration with this community of authors. This yearly overview serves to document and report on the developments Indigenous Peoples have experienced throughout 2020. *The Indigenous World 2021* adds not only documentation, but also includes a special focus on COVID-19.

Throughout 2020, Indigenous Peoples were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with, among other things, lack of access to proper health services, limited health information in Indigenous languages, minimal to no virtual education opportunities for Indigenous students and closure of markets for the sale of goods. Indigenous Peoples proved their resilience by setting up their own networks and solutions, connecting communities to help transfer information and goods, and implementing traditional methods of protection to keep themselves safe from the virus and the intrusion of outsiders who potentially carried it. Nonetheless, as the pandemic spread, Indigenous Peoples continued to be persecuted, threatened, criminalised and killed in their efforts to defend their rights, sometimes under the guise of emergency laws enacted to mitigate the virus, but which also allowed for Indigenous Peoples' rights to be violated and their lands to be exploited.

The 62 regional and country reports and 20 reports on international processes and initiatives covered in this edition underscore these trends. IWGIA publishes this volume with the intent that it is used as a documentation tool and as an inspiration to promote, protect and defend the rights of Indigenous Peoples, their struggles, worldview and resilience.

