**International Labour Organization’s submission to the CEDAW Committee for the General Recommendation on the Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls**

The present submission is based on recent research conducted by the ILO into the realities of indigenous women and some of the main challenges faced by them across regions. ILO’s research testifies to indigenous women’s role as emerging actors and partners for inclusive and sustainable development. The submission also draws on data and information stemming from the Indigenous Navigator initiative[[1]](#footnote-1) ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)), providing insights into the experiences, needs, concerns and aspirations of indigenous women in 11 countries[[2]](#footnote-2) in Africa, Asia and Latin America. While this submission presents a selection of data contained in recent ILO and Indigenous Navigator reports, complete information on methodology, data, and graphs, as well as complementary information on other indicators can be found in the publications referenced in the section “Useful resources”.

The submission starts by introducing recent population estimates on indigenous women, their presence by region as well as by place of residence. In the following section, we present data on indicators that are relevant for the assessment of equality and non-discrimination, namely, the prevalence of discrimination, violence and harassment, access to education, employment and informality, wage gaps, and poverty. This section is concluded with a summary of how pre-existing inequalities are translating into disproportionate impacts for indigenous women during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the third section, findings of a recent study conducted by the ILO on barriers to the participation and organization of indigenous women are presented. The role of indigenous women as agents of change is highlighted and key areas for intervention are pointed out. Based on the information presented, the submission concludes with considerations for the discussion and drafting process of the General Recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls.

# Overcoming invisibility: global estimates on indigenous women

The lack of data available on indigenous peoples is a problem with serious impacts on policymaking. In particular, estimates of the population continue to be challenged by the limited recognition of indigenous peoples at the country level and an absence of disaggregated data. In attention to this gap, in 2019 an [ILO report](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf) presented new data relating to the population of indigenous peoples for that year. Based on the self-identification of survey respondents, the document includes a detailed analysis by region, country income group, sex, as well as type of place of residence (rural/urban), using data drawn from population censuses, labour force and household surveys.[[3]](#footnote-3)

ILO estimates put the number of indigenous peoples globally at over 476 million, or 6.2 per cent of the world’s population ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf))[[4]](#footnote-4). Of these, 238.4 million are indigenous women, representing 6.2 per cent of the global female population.[[5]](#footnote-5) Regional estimates show that most indigenous women live in the Asia and the Pacific region (167.7 million), followed by Africa (38.7 million), Latin America and the Caribbean (28 million), Northern America (3.8 million), and Europe and Central Asia (around 0.2 million). The largest share of indigenous peoples (81.4 per cent) lives in middle-income countries.

Globally, 350 million indigenous peoples live in rural areas, representing 73.4 per cent of the global indigenous population. Of these, 173.1 million are women ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)). While most indigenous peoples in Africa (82.1 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (72.8 per cent), and European and Central Asia (66.4 per cent) live in rural areas, this is not the case for Latin America and the Caribbean and Northern America. In the former, 52.2 per cent of indigenous peoples live in urban areas and 47.8 in rural zones, while in the latter the distribution is 69 per cent in urban areas and 31 per cent in rural regions.

Indigenous peoples, especially those in rural areas, are directly impacted by climate change as well as by climate-related mitigation and adaptation actions ([ILO 2017](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/WCMS_551189/lang--en/index.htm)). The scale and distribution of indigenous peoples’ populations around the world serve as an important reminder that initiatives to address climate change need to empower indigenous women and men as agents of change ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)).

# Equality and non-discrimination, with a focus on indigenous women and girls and intersecting forms of discrimination

Throughout the world, indigenous women are reported to face inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, geographic location, and disability. Indigenous women and girls are also affected by broader contexts of discrimination against indigenous peoples, which have their roots in colonial domination, as well as by limited access to social services and dispossession of their ancestral lands ([UNICEF et al. 2013](https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/5/violence-against-indigenous-women-and-girls.pdf?la=en&vs=1457)). Identifying and addressing the root causes of these inequalities, along with harnessing the transformations underway, will be critical for achieving sustainable development. Urgent action is required to combat discrimination, exclusion and marginalization; the lack of respect for the rights of indigenous women and girls; as well as public policies that overlook their needs and aspirations, and exclude them from decision-making on development processes ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)).

In the following subsections, we highlight estimates which underscore the gaps faced by indigenous women and girls. These data are complemented by information stemming from the Indigenous Navigator. It is important to note that Indigenous Navigator data represents respondents’ perceptions and experiences on the ground and does not represent official statistical data. Instead, the information provides an insight into indigenous peoples’ realities and perspectives. Across all regions, indigenous women reported that they face multiple discrimination, unequal pay, violence and harassment, both within and outside their communities, limited access to health services, lack of recognition of their land rights, and limited participation in decision-making affecting their lives ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

## Discrimination, violence, and harassment

Discrimination, violence and harassment, stemming from their being both indigenous and women, are among the barriers impeding indigenous women’s full participation in economic and social life ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)). Indigenous Navigator data shows that similar proportions of indigenous women and men in participating communities reported discrimination connected to their indigenous identity, exceeding 60 per cent in some cases. The reporting of gender-based discrimination by indigenous women varied from almost 20 per cent to more than 60 per cent. Additionally, between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of indigenous women reported age-related discrimination. In most countries, indigenous women were more likely to face discrimination based on age than men. Lastly, in all reporting countries at least 40 per cent of indigenous women reported income-related discrimination ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

In the world of work, human trafficking and forced labour are serious human rights violations that particularly affect women and girls, who account for 99 per cent of victims of the commercial sex industry and 58 per cent in other sectors ([ILO 2017](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf)). Through the Indigenous Navigator, cases of human trafficking of indigenous women and girls were reported in the Asian region. Additionally, cases of prostitution of indigenous girls were reported in Latin America and Africa, and in the latter, this was indicated as a reason for school dropout ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

Most countries covered by the Indigenous Navigator recorded cases of physical or sexual violence against women and girls, perpetrated by both community and non-community members. According to Indigenous Navigator data, 47 per cent of the communities indicated that their customary law institutions handled either all or most cases of domestic violence ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)). This suggests that, at least in some communities, indigenous women may be able to rely on a support structure to handle cases of violence perpetrated by a partner.

## Lack of access to formal education

Educational inequalities are a fundamental barrier for indigenous women and girls. A lack of education or low levels of educational attainment are factors that determine the type of work performed by indigenous women and, consequently, have an impact on their incomes. Data on persons in employment show that indigenous women have the lowest chance of achieving basic education ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)). Globally, 53.5 per cent of indigenous women in employment have no formal education, a much higher rate if compared to their non-indigenous counterparts (17.8 per cent) as well as to indigenous men (42.5 per cent). In Africa, this proportion reaches as high as 89.9 per cent, compared to 62.2 per cent of their non-indigenous counterparts ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)). A study published by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) shows that the illiteracy rate among young indigenous women (aged 15–24) is alarmingly high in both urban and rural areas in Latin America. In some countries in the region, the illiteracy rate of young indigenous women in rural areas is above 15 per cent ([Del Popolo 2018](https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/43187-pueblos-indigenas-america-abya-yala-desafios-la-igualdad-la-diversidad)). This trend spans from the completion of primary school to enrolment in higher levels of education.

Indigenous Navigator respondents indicated that among the main barriers to access education are long distances and lack of transportation, poverty, lack of teaching in indigenous languages, the precariousness of school infrastructure, and parents’ lack of interest. Among specific barriers to access secondary education were mentioned adolescent pregnancy and the need to work. Poverty, discrimination, and the difficulty of combining work and education as reasons for school dropout ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)). Data gathered through the Indigenous Navigator also suggests that indigenous women and girls have low levels of access to vocational training ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

A positive case in access to tertiary education was reported in a country in Asa, where seven indigenous women who completed their studies in law were admitted to the national bar association. These women had been supported by a national organization of indigenous youth and a national indigenous women’s organization during their studies, an example of indigenous organizations’ leadership in guaranteeing access to education and professional affiliation ([ILO and IWGIA 2021](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/WCMS_792208/lang--en/index.htm)).

## Indigenous women are more often in employment but are overrepresented in the informal economy and earn less than their non-indigenous counterparts

Indigenous peoples’ participation in the world of work makes valuable contributions to local, national and global economies, spanning social, economic, and environmental spheres ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)). In the rural economy, indigenous women predominantly work in various traditional occupations. Based on responses from the Indigenous Navigator, important traditional occupations performed by indigenous women range from handicrafts (e.g. weaving, sewing, embroidering), collecting non-timber products, and agricultural activities (e.g. planting, grazing cattle), to care work (e.g. domestic work, cooking), midwifery, traditional healing practices, among others ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

These occupations often share a unique relationship with indigenous lands and their natural resources and have particular significance for indigenous ways of living ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)). However, over the past decades increasing loss of control over their ancestral and traditionally occupied land as well as their natural resources, among other factors, led to major changes in the lives and livelihoods of indigenous peoples. While indigenous women continue practising their traditional occupations, these changes have resulted in an increasing number of indigenous women entering the formal and informal labour markets ([Vinding, Kampbel 2012](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_173293.pdf)).

Globally, indigenous women are more likely to be in employment than their non-indigenous counterparts. 49.3 per cent of indigenous women are in employment compared to 45.6 per cent of non-indigenous women. However, indigenous women are less likely to be employed as the national income level rises. In upper-middle-income countries, for example, 42.7 per cent of indigenous women are employed compared with 55.6 per cent of non-indigenous women, amounting to a 12.7 per cent gap ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)). ILO data shows that motherhood also contributes to lower employment rates for indigenous women. Around the globe, 43.5 per cent of indigenous mothers of children aged 0 to 5 years are in employment compared to 86.4 per cent of indigenous fathers. They are also less likely to be employed than indigenous women without young children ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)).

A higher rate of participation in employment, however, does not necessarily translate into decent work opportunities. In fact, indigenous women’s work is often marked by poor working conditions, low pay and discrimination ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)). Indigenous peoples are less likely to be in wage and salaried work than their non-indigenous counterparts. When they are in wage and salaried work, indigenous peoples tend to earn less than their non-indigenous counterparts. Without exception, when indigenous women are compared with their non-indigenous counterparts, they face a pay gap (8.2 per cent) ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)).

ILO data also shows that indigenous women are disproportionally dependent on the informal economy to make ends meet, as over 86 per cent of them work in the informal economy. Indigenous women are 26 percentage points more likely to be working in the informal economy than their non-indigenous counterparts ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)). As limiting factors to access formal employment and decent work opportunities, Indigenous Navigator respondents have indicated discrimination, as well as lack of access to education and vocational training ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

As of 2019, 54 per cent of indigenous women globally worked in the agricultural sector, 18.8 per cent in market services[[6]](#footnote-6), 13.7 per cent in non-market services[[7]](#footnote-7), 8.6 per cent in manufacturing, 3.6 per cent in construction, and 0.4 per cent in mining and quarrying; electricity, gas and water supply ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)).

## Poverty has a gendered and indigenous dimension

Based on data available for 23 countries representing 83 per cent of the global indigenous population, indigenous peoples constitute 9.3 per cent of the population in these countries but almost 19 per cent of the extreme poor, defined as people leaving below US$1.90 a day. Using these parameters, 18.3 per cent of indigenous women live below the poverty line ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)). Indigenous Navigator respondents have also been asked about their own perceptions of how many men and women in their community were poor. Except for communities in two Latin American countries, respondents reported significant levels of poverty, with communities in five countries indicating that at least five in ten women were living in poverty ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

## Pre-existing inequalities led to disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on indigenous women.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to be assessed. Nevertheless, it can already be noticed that pre-existing inequalities are translating into additional vulnerabilities for indigenous peoples ([ILO 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/publications/WCMS_746893/lang--en/index.htm)). In particular, gender inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination have placed indigenous women in an especially vulnerable situation during the global pandemic.

According to Indigenous Navigator respondents, COVID-19 is having a negative impact on indigenous women’s livelihoods and economic opportunities, since they are no longer able to sell their products in local markets and may have lost their work in the cities. Indigenous women were also reported to face difficulties in accessing basic services such as water and sanitation and health facilities. The loss of jobs, the isolation and the additional burden of traditional occupations were deemed to be causing mental distress, and indigenous women were also reported to be suffering from an increase in gender-based violence ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

# Effective participation, consultation and consent of indigenous women and girls in political and public life

Since its foundation, the ILO has been promoting indigenous and tribal peoples’ rights through the formulation of international standards, strategies, and programmes. Notably, the **Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)**[[8]](#footnote-8) stands out as the only international treaty open for ratification with specific provisions for the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples’ rights. In particular, it promotes their right to consultation and participation in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for development, as enshrined in articles 6 and 7 of Convention No. 169. Consultation and participation are recognized as collective rights of indigenous and tribal peoples and as fundamental principles of inclusive development and democratic governance ([ILO 2013](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/publication/wcms_205225.pdf)). They are simultaneously a right and a means for designing and implementing public policies that can bring about concrete improvements in the living conditions of indigenous and tribal peoples ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)).

ILO Convention No. 169 provides an essential framework for the design of inclusive institutions both in ratifying and non-ratifying countries. It also serves as an important basis to ensure indigenous and tribal peoples’ participation in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies and plans focussing on the rights of indigenous women and girls. Inclusive institutions and mechanisms for the participation of indigenous peoples in general, and indigenous women in particular, are essential for bringing their perspectives and interests into policymaking. These are key elements in the construction of trust and ensuring that public policies address existing inequalities ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)).

ILO research has pointed to important challenges in countries that lack appropriate institutional and legal frameworks, as well as tools and methodologies for public authorities, to ensure the right to consultation and participation for indigenous and tribal peoples, including for indigenous women who are still underrepresented in decision-making processes ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)). Countries with a designated lead agency responsible for indigenous affairs have demonstrated the greatest progress in implementing mechanisms for the participation of indigenous peoples ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)). The presence of public institutions dedicated specifically to indigenous affairs has also proven to be important in times of crisis. Several countries that have such institutions have been able to undertake targeted measures to support indigenous peoples in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic ([ILO 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/publications/WCMS_746893/lang--en/index.htm)).

Building and strengthening institutions for indigenous peoples’ participation, which ensure the full involvement of indigenous women, is indispensable to achieve social cohesion and build a common vision for inclusive and sustainable development for all ([ILO 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/publications/WCMS_746893/lang--en/index.htm)). In this sense, action is needed to guarantee indigenous women and girls’ participation in public life. Recent ILO research shows that indigenous women still face numerous barriers to participation in decision-making processes, as described in the lines below.

## Indigenous women reported limited participation in decision-making processes affecting their lives

The Indigenous Navigator framework assessed the issue of participation in public life through a series of questions that provide information disaggregated by sex. In most respondent communities at least 80 per cent of indigenous women indicated to have recognized citizenship, but in one African country less than 40 per cent of indigenous were reported to possess identity cards, birth certificates or other official documentation confirming their registration as citizens of the country in which they were born. Only in one Asian and one Latin American country all respondents reported having recognized citizenship. This data is worrisome as it indicates that many indigenous women still cannot take part in elections and exercise their right to vote ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

For example, in only four of the researched countries did communities report that more than 80 per cent of indigenous women were able to vote. In many countries, the percentage was 60 per cent or below. Indigenous Navigator data also shows that only 7 per cent of communities reported that indigenous women hold seats in the national parliament. Regarding local government bodies, just 29 per cent of communities had women on local government seats, while 47 per cent of indigenous men held such positions. Indigenous women reported facing barriers to participation in decision-making both outside and within their communities ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)).

## Barriers to indigenous women’s participation and organization

The ILO has recently published qualitative research undertaken with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which explored the barriers to indigenous women’s participation and organization, as well as avenues to tackle them. The study was conducted between 2018 and 2019 in four countries, namely Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cameroon, and Guatemala.

The research team used a common methodological framework to identify, through direct interaction with indigenous women, barriers to their organization and participation operating at various levels, including their root causes. Three types of barriers to indigenous women’s participation have been identified. The first are physical barriers, which include socioeconomic conditions (e.g., financial dependence on men), lack of access or difficulty in gaining access to physical meeting spaces, and weak communication networks. The second are psychological barriers, namely lack of awareness and knowledge, skills, and abilities (e.g., language barriers and poor access to education), as well as emotions and motivations (e.g., fear of losing their job). The third are social barriers, such as gender norms, roles and perceptions (e.g. negative perceptions about participation), violence, harassment and discrimination, and political and organizational issues (e.g. lack of representative organisations, under-representation in meetings) ([ILO 2021](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_779265/lang--en/index.htm)).

## Indigenous women are agents of change in combatting climate change and building sustainable development, and their organizations have been playing a central role in responding to challenges emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As demonstrated above, the inequalities experienced by indigenous women are more pronounced, but indigenous women’s voices are starting to be heard. Indigenous women are emerging as actors and partners for inclusive and sustainable development. They have formed alliances among themselves, from the local to the transnational level, to demand participation in decision-making at all levels and decent work, while underscoring their rights, cultures, and identities as assets ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)).

Indigenous women’s organizations are also playing an important role in building the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been actively demanding a culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive response to the crisis, participating in forums and discussions, and collecting data on the impact of COVID-19 in their communities. In the context of the Indigenous Navigator initiative, partner indigenous women organizations have redirected their resources to provide indigenous communities with information about, and mechanisms to prevent, COVID-19 ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)). Recognizing and fostering indigenous women’s role as agents of change and leaders in building a sustainable future is a key element for building back better.

## Key areas of intervention to strengthen indigenous women’s participation and organization

The ILO report on barriers to indigenous women participation and organization aimed to raise awareness of the situation of indigenous women and propose entry points for promoting progress regarding their participation in decision-making processes ([ILO 2021](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_779265/lang--en/index.htm)). Research findings suggest that, in order to identify solutions, policymakers need to take into account the collective and individual dimensions of existing barriers, while respecting indigenous women's priorities, worldviews, and cultural identity. The conclusions point to the importance of indigenous women taking the lead in the development and implementation of any strategy to support and strengthen their organisation and participation in decision-making. Relevant international instruments, in particular the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), provide a solid basis and authoritative guidance for formulating such strategies.

The study suggests focusing on three main areas of intervention, namely ([ILO 2021](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_779265/lang--en/index.htm)):

1. Strengthening policy, legal and institutional frameworks relating to indigenous peoples' rights.
2. Proactively supporting indigenous women's participation and organisation.
3. Supporting indigenous women's economic empowerment through access to decent work and social protection.

Actions in these areas are key to addresses the long-standing patterns of exclusion and discrimination experienced by indigenous women and guarantee their right to effective participation in political and public life ([ILO 2021](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_779265/lang--en/index.htm)).

# Considerations

Considering the data presented above and the scope of the CEDAW Committee’s work, the ILO would like to propose the following items for consideration in the preparation of the General Recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls:

1. It is essential to build the capacity of national statistical offices to collect, analyse, and disseminate data regarding indigenous women and girls, including indigenous persons with disabilities, and indigenous persons living with HIV.
2. In addition to the improvement in the availability and quality of statistical data on the situation of indigenous women and girls, fostering qualitative research is also important to ensure a full understanding of the barriers to equality experienced by indigenous women and girls.
3. It is urgent to challenge and end discriminatory attitudes and stereotyping as well as harassment and violence based on ethnicity, indigenous identity and gender, phenomena that are persisting and entrenched obstacles to indigenous women’s equality. This should include building strong institutions to provide appropriate responses to cases of gender-based violence against indigenous women, particularly in the world of work, as envisaged in [ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190) and its accompanying [Recommendation (No. 206).](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_ILO_CODE:R206:NO)
4. It should be ensured that indigenous women can obtain official documentation to exercise their political rights, have access to political spheres, and have their leadership leveraged by implementing policy interventions to boost their skills and abilities to participate in decision-making forums.
5. Current gaps in the implementation of indigenous peoples’ collective and individual rights, particularly concerning the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), should be addressed. Particular attention should be given to the rights to consultation and participation, to define and pursue priorities for development, to land and natural resources, as well as effective access to justice when rights are violated.
6. The current lack of access to basic social services and infrastructure should be addressed within the framework of national and local development strategies designed and implemented with the participation of indigenous women and men. Such strategies should be responsive to the needs and priorities identified by them and pay particular attention to identifying and tackling the specific obstacles faced by indigenous women and girls. Access to bilingual and culturally appropriate education is particularly crucial in this regard.
7. State institutions charged with promoting and enforcing indigenous peoples’ and women’s rights should be strengthened, providing them with the technical and financial capacity to discharge their functions in a systematic and coordinated fashion at national and local levels.
8. Indigenous women’s participation in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies that concern them should be ensured, including at the local level, in areas such as equality and non-discrimination, education, employment and occupation, social protection, climate change, and gender-based violence.
9. Particular attention to the needs and priorities of indigenous women should be given when building social protection floors, as identified through their participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of related measures and programmes.
10. The creation and functioning of indigenous women’s organizations and networks should be supported and the exchange of experiences among them facilitated. This could include support for the creation of suitable meeting spaces and support services, taking into consideration family responsibilities on women, the security situation affecting their communities, transportation needs, and women’s limited proficiency in the national languages, among others.
11. Capacity-building for indigenous men and women on gender equality and indigenous women’s rights should be provided, and initiatives undertaken by indigenous women themselves supported.
12. Indigenous women’s rights at work should be ensured, as well as their right to engage freely in their traditional and other economic activities, including their right to access the resources needed to perform those activities. In this sense, action should be boosted to enhance the recognition and protection of women’s rights to land and natural resources and to ensure their access to remedies in case of dispossession as well as to assist women in the development of strategies to transform gender norms concerning access to land.
13. Indigenous women’s livelihoods should be supported, in consultation with them, by formulating appropriate comprehensive public policies that support their collective initiatives, including adequate support for programmes and projects designed to promote indigenous women’s sustainable entrepreneurial activities.

Indigenous women’s economic empowerment should be enabled through action to improve their working conditions, including equal pay for work of equal value, leveraging existing skills and knowledge, and supporting indigenous women-led enterprises and cooperatives.

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# Useful resources

The following ILO publications on indigenous women and girls, referenced throughout this submission, are available in English, French, and Spanish in the hyperlinks below. For accessibility purposes, the Word version of the documents have also been shared with the Committee’s Secretariat:

* ILO 2019: [“Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future”.](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_735607/lang--en/index.htm)
* ILO and IWGIA 2020: [“Indigenous women’s realities: Insights from the Indigenous Navigator”](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)
* ILO 2021: [“Exploring and tackling barriers to Indigenous women’s participation: A study based on qualitative research in Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cameroon and Guatemala”](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_779265/lang--en/index.htm)
1. The Indigenous Navigator is a monitoring framework that enables indigenous peoples to track progress in the implementation of international standards concerning indigenous peoples’ rights, which are contained in the ILO Convention No. 169, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and other human rights instruments. It also gives indigenous communities the opportunity to assess by themselves the degree to which the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have been met. On the one hand, the Indigenous Navigator provides policymakers, academia, development actors and the public at large with insights on indigenous peoples’ realities, perspectives and needs. On the other, it acts as an important tool for empowering indigenous peoples and their organisations to monitor their rights and development. While not constituting official statistical data that reflects the realities of indigenous peoples in an entire country, data gathered through this framework is complementary to other forms of data and has the potential to improve sustainable development-related data, making significant contributions for the design of strategies to understand indigenous women’s realities and realize their rights. Indigenous women have actively participated in the formulation of the framework. Elements for assessing the situation of indigenous women were mainstreamed throughout the framework, with gender equality being considered as a key issue for several substantial rights ([ILO and IWGIA 2020](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_760038/lang--en/index.htm)). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Namely Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, Nepal, Kenya, Peru, Philippines, Suriname, and Tanzania. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For a more detailed explanation on the methodology used in the report, please see [ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf), Annex I. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Country-level data on indigenous peoples’ population could only be gathered for the 58 most populous countries where indigenous peoples are considered to live. As a result, the true extent of the indigenous peoples’ population is likely to be found to be even greater than the estimates presented above ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Global estimate by sex based on 50 countries ([ILO 2019](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf)). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Including trade; transportation; accommodation and food; and business and administrative services. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Including public administration; Community, social and other services, and activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The complete text of ILO Convention No. 169 is available [here](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)