



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Contributions to the OHCHR Report on participation of Indigenous Peoples at the UN

OHCHR Report on participation of Indigenous Peoples at the UN

1. Existing procedures:

a. *What are the current venues of Indigenous Peoples' participation in your organization? In what meetings can Indigenous Peoples officially participate? Do they participate in meetings at the national or international levels? If so, where?*

FAO recognizes Indigenous Peoples as key allies for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Within FAO's mandate, indigenous Peoples' food and knowledge systems are considered pivotal in addressing the triple crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change and food security. Therefore, it is fundamental for FAO not only to facilitate the participation of Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings on issues affecting them, but also to ensure their engagement.

FAO's commitment to Indigenous Peoples' participation is evident through various venues. FAO supports Indigenous Peoples' participation at national and international levels, acknowledging that their food systems are intimately tied to nature and able to provide food and nutritional security while maintaining biodiversity and supporting climate resilience. Hence, it is fundamental that Indigenous Peoples play a pivotal role in global policy discussions, including the UN Food Systems Summit, UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028), Water Action Decade, and the COP of the UN Framework Convention of Climate Changes (UNFCCC).

A significant endeavor is the II session of the Biennial UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum, which follows a 2019 UNDESA recommendation. 184 Indigenous Youth from the seven socio-cultural regions met face to face in FAO headquarters, in Rome, to discuss about the future of Indigenous

Peoples' food and knowledge systems. Serving as a crucial venue for interaction with different stakeholders, the UNGIYF showcased the commitment to empower the voices and allow the participation of Indigenous Youth in the discussion fora. The resulting Rome Declaration on Safeguarding Future Generations in times of Food, Social, and Ecological Crisis was read at UNFCCC-COP28 and pre-shared during the CFS Session in October, demonstrating the tangible outcomes of this Forum.

Moreover, FAO serves as the secretariat for three venues dedicated to Indigenous Peoples: the Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples' food systems, Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' food systems, and the Rome Group of Friends. These platforms enable the participation of Indigenous Peoples and advance their agenda at various levels, by also seeking to integrate their knowledge into policy framework and decision-making processes.

The Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems, which was officially endorsed by FAO Members at the 27th session of the FAO's Technical Committee on Agriculture (COAG), brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts from universities, research centers, Indigenous Peoples and UN agencies. In March 2023, it convened its first in-person meeting post-pandemic. With over 80 participants from diverse regions and organizations, this gathering laid the groundwork for impactful collaborations. The outcomes of this meeting not only increased the Global-Hub's membership to 31 organizations, but also prompted an increase in requests from academic, researchers, and Indigenous organizations to join the collective efforts. This collaborative spirit, extended to the formation of five drafting committees and three working groups, contributing to the drafting and finalization of two Wiphala papers and the editing of the standards of practice on ecosystem restoration. This concerted effort showcased the dedication of diverse stakeholders to advancing Indigenous Peoples' causes together with Indigenous Peoples.

The Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' Food System, which was established during the UNFSS21, aims to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are engaged as effective partners and to enable to work with FAO Members, UN Agencies, the private sector, bilateral and multilateral development institutions, and other relevant stakeholders to build healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems. Expanding to 14 countries (Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Dominican Republic, Finland, Spain, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ireland, Lesotho, Panama), 6 UN organizations, and several Indigenous Peoples' organizations, the Coalition drafted a comprehensive workplan set for implementation in 2024. A remarkable milestone is that the Coalition succeeded in having Indigenous Peoples' Food and Knowledge Systems included in the programme of work of the World Committee on Food Security (CFS).

Simultaneously, the Rome Group of Friends on Indigenous Peoples expanded under Mexico's chairmanship, reached 43 FAO members that regularly convene to discuss Indigenous Peoples' issues. One of its main goals is to enhance participation of Indigenous Peoples to UN meetings, such as the FAO Committees on Agriculture (COAG), Forestry (COFO) and Fisheries (COFI).

*b. What are the **modalities of Indigenous Peoples' participation**? Are there remote avenues for engagement at different stages of any process (i.e. before, during and after convenings)? How can they participate? What can they do during the meetings? How can they influence the outcomes of the meetings? Do they participate online or in person? Are there special channels/platforms to reach Indigenous Peoples and in which languages? How does your entity guarantee the meaningful, inclusive and safe participation of Indigenous Peoples?*

Indigenous Peoples participate and engage through various channels such as the Global-Hub, the Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' food systems, the Rome Group of Friends, the Committee on the World Food Security and so forth. Indigenous Peoples play a fundamental role in shaping outcomes by sharing their knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and making recommendations. They may also serve on expert groups or advisory panels, like the Drafting Committee for the Standards of Practice on Ecosystem Restoration.

FAO offers hybrid participation in most events and meetings, allowing Indigenous Peoples to engage without needing to travel. When the participation is more desirable in person, FAO provides travel assistance and accommodation to the Indigenous Peoples' travelers, when is needed.

Whenever is possible, information is provided in multiple languages, including those spoken by Indigenous Peoples. However, this can be challenging due to limited resources. Additionally, finding interpreters for Indigenous languages is not always easy. FAO's policy is to respect Indigenous Peoples' rights, culture, knowledge, as well as providing support for their active engagement. Meaningful, inclusive and safe participation is guaranteed, including a respectful and non-discriminatory environment where Indigenous Peoples can freely express their views, engage in dialogue with other stakeholders, and contribute to decision making processes.

c. What participation criteria does your organization apply to accredit Indigenous Peoples' participants? Do Indigenous Peoples participate as organizations? Can Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions participate as such? Do they participate as individuals or independent experts? How does your entity guarantee the participation of Indigenous women, youth and persons with disabilities?

Considering FAO's multifaceted nature, encompassing both technical and normative aspects, Indigenous Peoples are engaged in different capacities – be it as representatives of organizations, institutions, or individual experts – depending on the topics under discussion. FAO prioritizes the involvement of Indigenous Youth, as evidenced by their participation in the 2023 UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum and their attendance at the World Food Forum in 2022. During the World Food Forum in 2022, an Indigenous youth delegation launched the campaign "My food vision is...", a campaign, led by the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, which seeks to address the challenges faced by Indigenous Youth and provide sustainable solutions for food systems, while also combatting climate change. Moreover, FAO actively promotes the engagement of Indigenous Women, ensuring gender balance in speakers and participants and launching initiatives such as the 2018 Global Campaign for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women for Zero Hunger, including the Violet Chair initiative to enhance their participation in policy-making processes. This initiative is a call to authorities, policy makers, organizations, the international community, academia and civil society to guarantee the full and effective participation of Indigenous women in policy discussions and decision-making processes. The initiative is called Violet Chair because it makes Indigenous women visible, a violet chair is placed during meetings to indicate that Indigenous women must have a seat. FAO also supports the empowerment of Indigenous women and youth, including through the Leadership Schools of Indigenous Women in Asia and Latin America. Since May 2015, more than 100 Indigenous women have been trained to become advocates for human rights, food security and nutrition.

Regarding persons with disabilities, FAO acknowledges the need for improvement, particularly in building accessibility, and is committed to addressing this issue as part of an ongoing process.

d. What are the selection criteria? What criteria does your organization use to select Indigenous Peoples to participate in the meetings?

FAO prioritizes the selection of Indigenous Peoples for meeting participation based on their expertise and relevant experience pertaining to the agenda topics. Diversity plays a crucial role in selection criteria, with a focus on achieving gender and geographical balance. Efforts are made to include representatives/organizations from as many of the seven socio-cultural regions as possible. For instance, during the UNGIYF, out of the 186 Indigenous Youth participants who came from 54 countries, spoke 93 languages, and represented 98 Indigenous Peoples' group.

2. Good practices

e. Since when have Indigenous Peoples participated in your organization's meetings? How has their participation evolved?

Indigenous Peoples have been actively participating in FAO meetings since the establishment of a dedicated Unit in 2014 to implement the 2010 FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, in alignment with the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In 2015, the FAO Indigenous Peoples Unit collaborated with Indigenous leaders from seven socio-cultural regions to draft a participatory work program structured around 7 pillars of work, and Indigenous Youth and women as two priority areas of work (Free Prior and Informed Consent; Indigenous Peoples' food systems; Voluntary guidelines on the governance of tenure; Indicators for food security; Advocacy and capacity building; Coordination; and Traditional Knowledge and Climate change). Since then, Indigenous Peoples' participation in FAO meetings has not only increased but has also become more actively engaged in shaping policies and programs.

f. Please briefly describe any good practices within your organization that should be considered for this report.

Within FAO, several commendable practices contribute to the participation and engagement of Indigenous Peoples, facilitating their involvement at various levels. As mentioned before, FAO Indigenous Peoples Unit serves as the secretariat for three key platforms: the Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples' food systems, the Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' food systems and the UN Rome Group of Friends on Indigenous Peoples. These venues play instrumental roles in facilitating the involvement and engagement of Indigenous Peoples at various levels, providing spaces for dialogue and collaboration.

FAO demonstrates a consistent commitment to inclusivity by actively seeking to incorporate Indigenous Peoples' perspectives and opinions into all agendas. This inclusive approach ensures that Indigenous Peoples' voices are heard and valued in decision-making processes.

Regarding the pillar of work on Free, Prior and Informed consent in 2018, FAO created an FPIC task force with the main aim of build capacity within and outside FAO with external partners on how to implement FPIC, providing training and prioritizing the inclusion and promotion of Indigenous Peoples' issues in the various programmes and projects.

To enhance capacity-building and involve Indigenous youth within FAO, the organization initiated an internship programme for Indigenous youth. Following this experience, many interns went on to establish careers within the UN system. However, as detailed in the section 3, this programme has been suspended due to resources constraints.

In addition, FAO met with OHCHR's Indigenous Fellowship programme and discussed with the fellows from the 7 socio-cultural regions on how to align the Fellowship programme with the UNGIYF.

g. Does your organization have an Indigenous advisory group or similar? If so, what are its functions?

FAO does not currently have an Indigenous advisory group or similar. However, Indigenous Peoples actively participate in FAO's initiatives through avenues such as the Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems, the Coalition and Indigenous Peoples' Food systems and the UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum. Their involvement ensure that Indigenous Peoples' perspectives are included into the agenda-setting process and decision-making procedures.

a) What success factors could be highlighted from your organization's experience with Indigenous Peoples' participation?

The II session of the Biennial UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum marked a success by convening 168 Indigenous youth, at FAO headquarters in Rome, fostering dialogue with different stakeholders and amplifying their voices. As preparations for the III Session of the biennial UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum, FAO extends an invitation to other UN agencies to collaborate.

Moreover, the launch of the "My Food Vision is..." campaign by the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus during the World Food Forum in October 2022 stands as a pivotal achievement. This initiative addresses pressing challenges faced by Indigenous Youth, offering sustainable solutions for food systems and addressing climate change.

Furthermore, the growth of the Global-Hub to 31 members and 2 PhD individual candidates, and the establishment of 5 drafting committees underscore progress towards inclusion. Additionally, the expansion of the UN Rome Group of Friends to 43 members solidifies its position as one of the largest UN Group of Friend on Indigenous Peoples, marking a significant advance in Indigenous Peoples' engagement at the global level.

3. Existing gaps

h. What have been the main challenges to Indigenous Peoples' participation in/engagement with your organization?

a) What action has your organization taken to address these gaps?

Insufficient funding presents a significant obstacle to FAO operations. In particular, one of the main challenges to Indigenous Peoples' participation in/engagement with FAO is the effective implementation of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for three main reasons: capacity building, lack of resources and the divergency that FPIC may create with the main donors. In response, FAO has taken proactive measures, including the development of the "Manual for project practitioners on Free, Prior and Informed Consent" in 2016, and collaborating with the EU to conduct FPIC training sessions. In addition, FAO has an Interdepartmental Working Group on Indigenous Peoples that allows the technical units to synergize efforts aimed at integrating Indigenous Peoples into all relevant venues.

Furthermore, FAO encounters difficulties due to the technical complexities related to the nature of its areas of work, which encompass intersecting topics such as food security, agriculture, and climate change. While initiatives such as the Indigenous Youth Internship programme was initiated to address this challenge, they faced impediments due to lack of funds.

During the organization of the UNGIYF, another prominent challenge faced was the procurement of visas and transit visas for Indigenous Youth, particularly those residing in areas far from the country's capital and those living in countries with no representation from Italy.