

Indigenous Peoples' Communication for Development



Collaborative efforts towards self-determined sustainable development

In collaboration with:

Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB)

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNFPII)





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For further information about this document please contact:
CSDI@fao.org

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This publication is part of a collective effort of both Indigenous Peoples' organizations and development agencies to promote the understanding and recognition that communication plays a key role in Indigenous Peoples' self-determined sustainable development. The paper describes the process promoted jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB) and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) to achieve this recognition. This effort is supported by FAO's Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI).

The document has been prepared under the supervision of Mario Acunzo, Lead Technical Officer of the CSDI, and edited by Vanessa Vertiz of CSDI with the support of Eliana Riojas of CIDOB.

Foreword

Indigenous Peoples' (IPs') possibilities for development are limited by several factors such as their linguistic and cultural marginalization, poor access to markets, limited control over their natural resources, little power of negotiation within their countries and inadequate access to communication media and tools, among others. In addition, their traditional communication processes and media have been affected by the process of acculturation and the overcrowding of information systems, which content rarely address IPs' concerns and the need to promote indigenous communication processes.

Within this framework, IPs have called for assistance based on their own needs, aiming to protect their cultural identity, heritage and livelihood. In recent years, especially in Latin America, IPs' organizations, as well as development agencies have recognized communication as a fundamental element for the development of human societies and for the survival of traditional cultures. They have also been working to strengthen IPs' organizations by enhancing their capacity to manage communication methods and tools, including communication platforms, in order to promote their participation in public policies decision-making and their ability to insert IPs' issues in national and international agendas.

Nowadays, communication is a basic element of IPs' self-determined development in that it allows the poorest communities to access knowledge and information reaffirms cultural and social identities and facilitates intercultural sharing. Furthermore, it enhances the participation of IPs' communities in local and national decision-making and supports the main IPs' struggles for self-determined development. An example is the central role that communication plays to support IPs' efforts to secure their right to their land, territories and natural resources. Communication strategies are used in this struggle to consolidate IPs' participation in the demarcation of their territories and their capacity to control communication processes, in order to ensure that this issue is taken into account in the national and international policy frameworks.

This example clearly shows why communication has to be consolidated by IPs' organizations, development agencies and governments, at the centre of IP's self-determined development.

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Introduction

FAO and other UN agencies recognize that communication is fundamental to promote sustainable development. Within this framework, Communication for Development (ComDev), a participatory communication approach that combines a variety of processes and tools ranging from rural radio to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), can contribute to IPs' development by: (i) facilitating equitable access to knowledge and information; (ii) promoting dialogue and IPs' participation and; (iii) enhancing IPs' capacity to manage communication processes for self-determined development.

Since 2006, FAO and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues have been collaborating in promoting initiatives to enhance IPs' capacities in the field of ComDev through a series of consultations and the establishment of IPs' communication platforms. In this context, FAO's Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI) programme gives special attention to vulnerable populations and indigenous communities, focusing on enhancing IPs' capacity to apply ComDev activities to sustainable natural resources management, particularly in the context of climate change adaptation in the agricultural, forestry, and fisheries sectors.

This document presents the results of a series of initiatives implemented by IPs' organizations, development agencies, FAO and the UNPFII to position Communication for Development as a key element in achieving social change and guaranteeing IPs the opportunity to benefit from their rights.

I - The Process of IPs ComDev

In recent years several Indigenous Peoples' (IPs') organizations, UN agencies and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) have started a process to advocate the role of communication in IPs' self-determined development.

Within this framework, ComDev has been acknowledged as a strategic element in contributing to IPs' sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management practices. Information, knowledge and communication are also key factors in helping IPs in their struggle against new development challenges such as climate variability and food insecurity. For centuries traditional knowledge has helped local communities reduce their vulnerability to external hazardous factors such as the negative effects of climate change and ComDev provides tools to recover such knowledge and share it in a larger context.

Nowadays, the appropriation of communication processes and media can ensure that IPs take control of these and others factors that affect their self-determined development. In fact, IPs' organizations in several regions of the world have used their creativity to implement communication systems, strategies and policies that fit their own needs for development.

Over the last thirty years, FAO has been promoting initiatives in the field of IPs' ComDev, strengthening IPs' capacity to manage communication processes that enable their communities to share needed knowledge and information and to achieve the development goals agreed on and prioritized by the IPs themselves.

In collaboration with the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and together with other UN agencies such as IFAD, FAO has supported a series of consultations and activities related to this topic:

- Two regional workshops in Latin America in 2006 and 2007.
- A special session during the First World Congress on Communication for Development (2006).
- The implementation of two regional platforms through web portals; and
- A special event during the Sixth Session of the UNPFII (2007).

In September 2006, the First International Indigenous Peoples' Meeting on Communication for Development was organized in Bolivia by the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB) and FAO for the purpose of sharing experiences, visions and best practices, and in order for the IPs present at the Meeting to prepare to influence the outcomes of the First World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD) which was to be held in Rome, on 25-27 October 2006.

The WCCD was organized by FAO, the World Bank and the Communication Initiative network, to demonstrate the added-value of Communication for Development (ComDev), provide data and impact evidence, showcase successful methods, approaches and experiences and provide recommendations on how to mainstream communication in development policies and programmes.

A special session on Indigenous Peoples' ComDev was included in the WCCD agenda and carried-out with the participation of IPs' representatives from Latin America, the Caribbean and other regions. Participants in the session prepared a declaration regarding the mainstreaming of ComDev within IPs' policies and programmes. The following benchmarks were established:

- By 2008, mechanisms for participation, consultation, collaboration and sharing of experiences between indigenous peoples in Communication for Development shall be established in at least two regions; and
- By 2008, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and related reports, managed by IPs' organizations in collaboration with UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, shall be established in at least ten countries.

In connection with the consultative processes leading to the WCCD special session on IPs, the Latin American Indigenous Peoples' Communication Platform¹ was developed by CIDOB with the support of FAO. Its aim was to create a collaborative mechanism for participation, consultation, coordination and knowledge sharing. The platform strategy had already been developed at the Second International Indigenous Peoples' Meeting on Communication for Development, organized in Bolivia in April 2007.

¹ www.plataformaindigena.org

The results of the WCCD, as well of the Second International ComDev Meeting were presented in special events organized during the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth sessions of the UNPFII.

The main decisions made during the Sixth Session of the UNPFII were to promote the inclusion of ComDev in the work of the UNPFII, as a key issue in the discussion of IPs' self-determined development and to implement at least two IPs' communication platforms (networks) as means to foster collaboration among IPs' organizations, the UNPFII and development agencies working in this area. One year later, almost all the recommendations of Sixth Session of the UNPFII had been accomplished by the IPs' organizations that had been involved, mainly those based in South and North America. The challenge was to expand the process to other regions and help the UNPFII take the lead in fostering collaboration among IPs' organizations, governments and development agencies in the field of ComDev.

The following year, during the Seventh Session of the UNPFII, the indigenous organizations confirmed their commitment to promoting the right to communication as a key element for IPs' self-determined development and knowledge sharing, and as a strategic asset to enhance IPs' participation in the management of their territories and natural resources, their access to information and their strategies for coping with climate change challenges. IPs' organizations also proposed that two more platforms be established, in 2009, in Africa and Asia, to promote dialogue among IPs' organizations in those regions.

The UNPFII held its Eighth Annual Session in 2009. During the session, indigenous delegations took part in an in-depth, interactive dialogue with six United Nations agencies and funds. FAO's presentation was complemented by a presentation given by a delegate of the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB), who presented an indigenous view on FAO's work through the IP's Communication for Development Platform.

The next section of this paper presents the results of the three UNPFII sessions previously mentioned.

II - Special Events on ComDev held during the Sessions of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

2.1 - The Sixth Session Special theme: “Territories, Lands and Natural Resources”

The Sixth Session of the UNPFII (14-25 May 2007) was an opportunity to advocate for the role of communication in IPs' development and to support IPs' strategies and their inclusion in policy dialogue on territories, lands and natural resource issues.

On 17 May 2007, a special session on communication was organized as part of the Web Seminar Series on ICT Policy Issues for Development promoted by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). This event was co-organized by the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). It was co-sponsored by the Secretariat for the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (SPFII) and was supported by the Intel Corporation and the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID). The attendees included 130 participants from civil society, governments and UN organizations.

The objective of this parallel session entitled “Indigenous Peoples and Communication for Development” was to provide a forum for discussion and learning on IPs Communication for Development goals and strategies, especially in relation to key issues such as territories, land and natural resources. The following recommendations were agreed upon during the session:

- To urge States, the United Nations, and development agencies to promote and guarantee Indigenous Peoples' right to communication as an essential component of self-determined development based on the principles of respect, equality, humanity -- and not discrimination -- especially in places where this right has been denied.
- To promote the focus and practices of communication for development from the perspective of IPs, strengthening their capacity to control and manage

communication processes and guaranteeing the participation of Indigenous women.

- To establish normative and regulatory frameworks, as well as public policies, for the implementation of the right to communication and development of IPs, guaranteeing adequate resources for implementation.
- To ensure that before 2008, there are mechanisms and platforms for participation, consultation, collaboration and interchange of experiences regarding ComDev among IPs, in at least two regions. This would include mechanisms and platforms for monitoring and evaluation, with references listed and managed by IPs' organizations, in collaboration with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in at least ten countries.
- That the theme of Communication and Development of Indigenous Peoples be taken by the Permanent Forum as a cross-cutting fundamental theme, in the fulfilment of its mandate, and that mechanisms of coordination and follow-up with IPs to support these activities, and as well as others, with the final recommendations stemming from the Forum, be established in the framework of the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

These recommendations led the UNPFII to support the consolidation of an IPs' Platform, as stated in the final report:

"155. The Permanent Forum welcomes the parallel side event on Indigenous Peoples and communication for development, organized by FAO and the secretariat of the Permanent Forum, in conjunction with the World Congress on Communication for Development, which was held in Rome in October 2006, and the Second International Summit on Communication for Development and Indigenous Peoples, which was held in Bolivia on 24 and 25 April 2007. The Permanent Forum endorses the elaboration of a "Platform of action on Indigenous Peoples' Communication for Development" by indigenous participants in the above process."

Furthermore, CIDOB, Keewaytinook Okimakanak Organization (K-Net), FAO and IFAD worked together with the UNPFII to achieve the goals established at the Sixth Session. New partners, including the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the

Amazon Basin (COICA) and the Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI), supported this effort. Thus, a ComDev platform for Latin American IPs began functioning and a second platform began to be developed by K-Net to promote consultation and collaboration on communication issues among IPs in North America.

2.2 - The Seventh Session Special theme: “Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges”

During the next UNPFII session (21 April – 2 May 2008), a second special event on Indigenous Peoples’ Communication for Development, Sustainable Natural Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation was held, and was co-organized by CIDOB, K-NET, COICA, IFAD, FAO, CSDI and the Secretariat of the UNPFII. The event provided a venue to promote communication as a key to IPs’ development and engagement in decision-making processes. It also served to identify mechanisms for collaboration in ComDev between IPs and UNPFII, establishing new benchmarks and follow-up actions.

The objectives of the second special event were:

- Assess the present situation of IPs’ ComDev and identify needs and priorities.
- Assess efforts in advancing ComDev within the UNPFII, IPs’ organizations and development agencies and identify mechanisms for collaboration.
- Share IPs’ experiences in communication, natural resource management and climate change adaptation.
- Assess the work of the IPs’ ComDev Platforms.
- Identify monitoring and reporting mechanisms on IPs’ experiences in ComDev.
- Assess results in achieving benchmarks and propose concrete recommendations.

That same year, the IPs’ Communication Platform was developed by K-NET to foster collaboration, participation and exchange of experiences among IPs in Anglophone countries.

The special event on Indigenous Peoples and Communication for Development “*Towards sustainable management of natural resources and climate change adaptation*”, was opened by Ms. Vicky Tauli Corpuz, UNPFII Chair, and by Mr Toshinko Murata, FAO Liaison and Executive Officer, Ms Eliana Rioja, CIDOB’s Coordinator of ComDev Projects, was in charge of reporting on the consolidation and strengthening process of the Latin American IPs’ communication platform. Likewise, other participants in the ComDev and IPs’ Panel were: Mr Brian Walmark and Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, Ms Mary Simat (President of Indigenous Peoples African Co-ordinating Committee – IPACC), Ms Maria Saravia (IPs’ Communication Platforms – CIDOB). Mr Egberto Tabo (President of COICA) chaired the session.

In their concluding remarks and recommendations, session participants recognized that today, communication is playing a key role in the self-determined development of IPs, as well as in their defence of the full application of their rights.

The indigenous organizations that participated in this special event reaffirmed their commitment to promoting the right to communication as a key element for IPs’ self-determined development. Communication is a fundamental tool necessary to share knowledge and improve IPs’ participation in decision-making, as well as to support initiatives and practices that enable the sustainable management of their territories and equitable access to information, knowledge and natural resources. All of these factors enable IPs to maintain their livelihoods and help them face the new challenges related to climate change.

The Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB) and K-NET decided to take on the task of promoting the right to communication within the framework of the UNPFII, and requested that the UNPFII support the initiatives they had implemented. At the same time, they emphasized their appreciation for the support provided by agencies such as FAO and IFAD in this matter, and requested that this support continue in coordination with the UNPFII, as well as involving other institutions as partners.

The representatives of IPs who participated in this session submitted a document containing recommendations and benchmarks to promote the application of appropriate policies in favour of fair development²:

² This document was signed by the Members of the “Plataforma de Comunicación y Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe”, comprised of the following organizations: COICA, CIDOB Bolivia, COIAB

Recommendations

Based on the discussions held in the context of the special event of the VII UNPFII, as well as other preparatory initiatives and the results of the work that each organization implements, the participants made the following recommendations to the Permanent Forum:

1. Ensure the right of the IPs to communication through normative and regulatory frameworks, policies and laws, as a fundamental element of the right to self-determined development, based on the principles of respect, equality, and non-discrimination, especially where this right is denied.
2. Implement policies, mechanisms and initiatives both at national as well as at the international level, to guarantee IPs' right to communication and to self-determined development.
3. Establish mechanisms that allow access to adequate resources for the implementation of the policies related to the IP's right to communication for their self-determined development.
4. Enable mechanisms that will help in the implementation of ComDev practices from IPs' perspectives, strengthening their capacities of controlling and managing communication processes and ensuring the participation of indigenous men and women.
5. Ensure that IPs' communication will be one of the key elements included in the initiatives related to natural resource management, climate change adaptation and biodiversity.
6. Promote the issue of IPs' ComDev as one of the key and cross-cutting themes of the agenda and the work of the Permanent Forum, of the governments, and national and international development agencies.

7. Strengthen the two existing IPs' Communication and Development Platforms (Latin America and North America), and promote the implementation of new platforms in other regions such as Asia y Africa.
8. Ensure support for strengthening monitoring and reporting mechanisms on the situation of the IPs' communication.
9. It is recommended that mechanisms and activities be established between the IPs and the Permanent Forum that will facilitate their agreement on themes and initiatives according to the general recommendations issued by the Sessions of the Permanent Forum that are related to IPs' development, or key topics such as territorial management, human rights, climate change impacts, natural resources, etc., with a special emphasis on communication.
10. Promote initiatives and projects that will strengthen the communication capacities of IPs' organizations, especially to support the sustainable management of natural resources and climate change adaptation.
11. Establish mechanisms to facilitate multi-donor support for the recommendations presented at the VII Session of the Forum from governments, international agencies and IPs' organizations.
12. It is recommended that work continue on research, systematization, knowledge sharing and experiences in IPs' communication and development within the framework of the communication platforms, international meetings and other initiatives of the Indigenous Peoples.

Benchmarks

1. By 2009, UNPFII will have a platform on Indigenous Peoples' Communication for Development.
2. By 2009, mechanisms for participation, consultation and collaboration to share experiences in IPs' Communication for Development that are being implemented through the IPs' communication platforms for Latin America and North America (through their portals, virtual consultations, meetings, research, training, etc.), will be strengthened and a special effort will be made to

implement at least other two platforms, one for the IPs in Africa and another for the IPs in Asia and the Pacific Region. These Platforms will also be used by the UNPFII to promote the dialogue with the IPs' organizations within each one of the regions.

3. By 2009, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and related reports regarding the situation of the IPs' communication will be formalized, ensuring that these will be implemented in at least 15 countries. Within this framework, a process to define indicators on this topic will be initiated.
4. By 2008, a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues shall be established in at least ten countries, managed by IPs' organizations in collaboration with the UN.
5. By 2009, communication will be one of the specific and cross cutting themes of the VIII Session of the UNPFII.

The UNPFII took into consideration IPs' proposal and in the final report included the following recommendation, which is crucial to the support to the ComDev Platform activities:

“The Permanent Forum encourages the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), jointly with other United Nations agencies, to support the consolidation of the already established communication platforms in Latin America and Canada and to establish platforms in Asia and Africa and the Pacific. The Forum recommends that FAO and other agencies strengthen the reporting and monitoring mechanisms for the communication platforms, especially with a view to supporting indigenous peoples with a monitoring mechanism for their territories.”

2.3 - The Eighth Session of the UNPFII

In 2009 (18–29 May), the eighth session of the UNPFII covered the progress on the following issues related to IPs:

- Implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007 by the General Assembly.

- Implementation of the recommendations related to economic and social development, indigenous women and the Second International Decade of Indigenous Peoples.
- Dialogue with six agencies and funds of the United Nations, including establishing future duties of the Permanent Forum on Economic, Social and other issues.
- Follow-up on issues raised during the previous sessions, to facilitate their application and fulfillment. In this regard, CIDOB presented the on-going experience of the Latin American IPs' Platform.

A remarkable segment of the Session was the participation of indigenous delegations in an in-depth dialogue with six United Nations agencies and funds. During this segment, FAO presented its approach on ComDev and discussed the challenge of incorporating the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Development Group's Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues into its policies and field programmes. CIDOB complemented FAO's presentation by presenting an indigenous perspective on FAO's activities related to IPs Communication for Development Platform. A new proposal for a "Communication for Development Platform for Indigenous and Unrepresented Peoples of Francophone Africa", developed in collaboration with Era Onlus, was also presented.

FAO's parallel session was chaired by the President of the Permanent Forum, Ms Victoria Taulli Corpuz. The FAO Representative, Ms Eve Crowley, Director a. i. of the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, who presented FAO's work in rural areas with IPs. During this presentation, CIDOB reported on the work and progress made on the IPs' Communication Platform and called for the UNPFII to support the platform as well as the participation in the platform of the organizations represented at the Forum, in order to guarantee the IPs right to communication.

The main recommendations put forth by CIDOB were:

1. To identify indicators and establish a monitoring system in ComDev to monitor the IPs' right to communication.
2. To consolidate and expand the Platforms in other regions and strengthen inter-regional alliances (e.g. CIDOB-FAO)

3. To create communication mechanisms between the Forum, IPs and development agencies.
4. To continue promoting IPs' communication and self-determined development at the international level.
5. To promote an African IPs' Communication Platform.

Members of the forum and IPs' representatives subsequently participated in a round of questions together with the president of COICA. The next steps proposed for the consolidation of IPs' ComDev initiatives were primarily related to support of UN agencies (especially FAO), and IPs' organizations for the above-mentioned recommendations.

Finally, in the Concluding Observations and Recommendations of the Eighth Session, the Permanent Forum encouraged FAO to:

“...continue supporting Indigenous Peoples' organizations in the field of communication for development. In particular, the Permanent Forum recommends that FAO continue to provide support for Indigenous Peoples' communication platforms and their activities in the field of participatory territorial development and community-based adaptation to climate change. The Permanent Forum recommends that other United Nations agencies and donor join FAO in that important task and strengthen the reporting and monitoring mechanisms about Indigenous Peoples' rights to communication as a condition towards free and informed prior consent and self-determined development.”

III - Towards an IPs' ComDev perspective

As previously indicated, ComDev is being recognized as a fundamental element for IPs' organizations as well as for other organizations working with them. ComDev is not only a matter of access to media and communication channels. It is also about social processes that allow IPs to achieve self-determined development and have their voices heard in national debates, by consolidating their participation in decision-making, policy formulation and development programmes.

As such, ComDev fulfils three specific functions:

1. **Access to information:** Communication facilitates access to information on the part of the most vulnerable and remote groups in order to have more opportunities for development, are aware of the policies and programs that affect them and be informed of their role within their countries.
2. **Participation:** Communication plays a fundamental role in IPs' right to free, prior and informed consent. This is not in terms of disseminating information, but rather it refers to a participatory process in which IPs can express their own point of view and influence decisions that affect them. ComDev is also important in enhancing IPs' mobilization and participation in venues where they can define their own vision of development.
3. **Knowledge exchange and capacity enhancement:** ComDev can play an important role in conserving IPs' identity and cultural heritage, as well as in the recovery and documentation of local knowledge and its interaction with technical and scientific knowledge.

The challenge for the future, as has been highlighted by participants in the Permanent Forum sessions, is to consolidate IPs' capacity in ComDev. Organizations, development agencies and IPs are working together to achieve this goal. It must be understood that ComDev should be valued as a strategic asset that helps IPs to define their own development strategies and goals, which must originate within their own organizations and communities, and later be shared at local and national levels.

IV- Recommendations

The process initiated by the UNFPPII, FAO and IPs' organizations should continue in order to ensure that ComDev is recognized as a central aspect of IPs' action. Additionally, ComDev should be consolidated as a permanent topic in the UNFPPII and the following activities should be monitored:

- Consolidation of existing communication platforms and establishment of new platforms in other regions.
- Assessment of the capabilities and possibilities of IPs to access communication media and processes, through a ComDev monitoring system.
- Consolidation of an interagency team in ComDev in order to strengthen platforms and expand IPs' participation in each region.
- Establishment of an ad hoc ComDev programme with indigenous participation.

Today, the challenge is to assess how ComDev can be integrated into the next UNFPPII agenda "*Indigenous Peoples: Development with culture and identity*", an issue which is closely related to communication. Unfortunately, thus far, the UNFPPII has not given sufficient consideration to ComDev in IPs' development processes, and has not given enough support to the establishment of networking mechanisms which would link IPs' organizations with United Nations agencies. In this regard, IPs' ComDev should be officially consolidated as a priority area of work by the UNFPPII.

