



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

**Indigenous peoples,
Afro-descendants and
climate change
in Latin America**

Ten scalable experiences of
intercultural collaboration

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Woman from the Yurumangui community, leader in forest governance, Valle del Cauca, Colombia.

BACK COVER PHOTO: ©FAO/Mauricio Mireles

Maloca indigenous woman, Canton of Talamanca, province of Limón, Costa Rica.



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**"Our stove is not only used
to cook food, but also
to create our identity."**

Darío Mejía Montalvo,
Zenú indigenous leader and
member of the Permanent Forum
on Indigenous Issues
of the United Nations

**"Oh when the forests were gone,
oh mother it didn't rain again aeee ...
Oh my river turned to stone,
there was no more dense forest aeee ..."**

Yurumanguireña song excerpt



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Indigenous Kichwa Otavalo artisan, Canton of Otavalo, Ecuador.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABRAE	Areas Under Special Administration (Venezuela)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CICA	Indigenous Council of Central America
COCOMASUR	Council of Black Communities of the Tolo River Basin and the Southern Coastal Zone
CONAF	National Forest Corporation (Chile)
DRMI	Regional District of Integrated Management (Colombia)
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ENAFOR	National Forestry Company (Venezuela)
EU-FAO FLEG	EU-FAO Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FILAC	Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean
FMW	Fuerza de Mujeres Wayúu
FP	Forest Products
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GIAHS	Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems
IDEAM	Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (Colombia)
IIWF	International Indigenous Women's Forum
ILO	International Labour Organization
INCODER	Colombian Institute for Rural Development
INCORA	Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform
INDAP	National Institute for Agricultural Development (Chile)
INDERT	National Institute for Rural Development and Land (Paraguay)
INDI	Paraguayan Institute for Indigenous Affairs
INFONA	National Forestry Institute (Paraguay)



IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MADES	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Paraguay)
MAG	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (Paraguay)
MDS	Ministry of Social Development (Paraguay)
MINAMBIENTE	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia
MINEC	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism (Venezuela)
NIAHS	Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems
NWFP	Non-Wood Forest Products
ODEPA	Agrarian Research and Policy Office (Chile)
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
REIFC	Network of Indigenous Climate Finance Specialists
RFI	Imataca Forest Reserve (Venezuela)
RRI	Rights and Resources Initiative
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SICA-OSPESCA	Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization
SMBYC	Forest and Carbon Monitoring System
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
WRI	World Resources Institute



Ixil indigenous man, Nebaj, municipality of the Department of Quiché, Guatemala.

FOREWORD


Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants are two of the rural groups with the greatest potential to contribute to climate change mitigation in Latin America.

Both groups are highly vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate on agriculture and food, yet their ancestral knowledge and collective territorial practices make them key allies in climate change mitigation.

Together, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants that inhabit the rural territories of Latin America represent nearly half (46 percent) of the rural population. At the same time, these groups occupy a vast area of the territories that are home to the greatest natural wealth on the continent, and their traditional management practices make them the best guardians of biodiversity.

Kuna indigenous children from Púcuro playing in the river, Darién Province, Panama.





For the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), social inclusion and reducing inequalities that disproportionately affect indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean is central to its mandate, especially in the fight to eliminate hunger and promote rural development; in line with the mandate of the United Nations to “leave no one behind,” as the core transformative goal of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

In line with its mandate to achieve a world free of hunger and malnutrition, and based on the utmost respect for universal human rights, FAO has a Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (FAO, 2011) to guide its global activities when working with them.

This document aims to highlight some of the actions that FAO, in close collaboration with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, have been carrying out over the past five years, and which have a high potential for scaling-up and replication in other areas for a transformational recovery, as well as for climate change mitigation in the region.

WHO ARE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND AFRO-DESCENDANTS IN THE LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN REGION?

In Latin America, one in four inhabitants self-identifies as indigenous or Afro-descendant. The Plurinational State of Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru have the highest number of indigenous populations, while Brazil has the largest Afro-descendant population (Angulo, Solano and Tamayo, 2018).

Indigenous peoples are defined as human groups descended from “populations which inhabited the country or a geographical region to which the country belonged at the time of conquest, colonization or the establishment of present state borders and which, whatever their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. In addition, awareness of their indigenous or tribal identity

Kuna indigenous woman from Púcuro, Darién province, Panama.



should be considered a key criterion for determining different groups” (ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples). Afro-descendants, meanwhile, correspond to “all peoples and individuals descended from the African diaspora in the world. In Latin America, the concept refers to the different ‘Black’ or ‘African-American’ cultures that emerged from the descendants of Africans, who survived the slave trade that took place in the Atlantic from the 16th to the 19th century” (Antón, 2010).

In addition to sharing origins, culture and identity, Afro-descendants face social problems primarily stemming from enslavement, colonization, discrimination and exclusion. This was recognized by the III World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held by the United Nations in Durban, South Africa in 2001 (United Nations, 2001, p.14, para. 34).

The collective experience in the region has made it possible to identify four dimensions for the use of the concept of “indigenous people”: self-identity, common origin, territoriality and the linguistic-cultural domain (Schkolnik and Del Popolo, 2005). For Afro-descendants, on the other hand, the racial dimension, in terms of phenotypic characteristics, has been the most widely used (Antón and Del Popolo, 2008).

The demands of Afro-descendants in Latin America also include the right to territory, understood as the geographic place where they settled or were forcibly located by the colonial slave-owning Europeans. These territories are affiliated with resistance and the proliferation of their own culture and identity. However, while international laws recognize indigenous peoples’ collective rights, these principles and rights only apply to those groups of Afro-descendants recognized as “tribal,” as well as those in some countries, such as Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador.



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Nasa indigenous woman, Indigenous Reservation of San Lorenzo de Caldone, Department of Cauca, Caldone, Colombia.

Beyond the wide variety of experiences in Latin America, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants share a socio-political reality in which ethnic discrimination and structural racism have contributed to situations of poverty, social and political exclusion (Iturralde, 2001; Hopenhayn and Bello, 2001; Oyarce, 2010). The historical dynamics of exclusion and marginalization affecting both groups have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Otavalo Kichwa indigenous artisan, Canton of Otavalo, Ecuador.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AFRO-DESCENDANTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA: THREE POINTS TO CONSIDER

The following are three key points for understanding the importance of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in the context of climate change:

1. Their population density in rural areas of the region;
2. The scope and biological richness of their collective territories;
3. Ancestral knowledge that enables the sustainable management of natural resources.

1. Population density in rural areas

- According to estimates for the year 2018, around 58.2 million indigenous people live in Latin America and the Caribbean, with roughly half living in rural areas.
- The rural indigenous population (30 million inhabitants) represents 24 percent of the total rural population of Latin America (123 million).
- The figures from the last census in each of the Latin American countries, along with estimates from 2020, reveal an estimated 134 million people who self-identify within categories related to Afro-descendants, which represents around 20.9 percent of the total population in the region (ECLAC 2020).
- It is estimated that 27 million Afro-descendants live in rural areas of the region (Freire *et al.*, 2018).

- The sum of the rural indigenous population (30 million) and the rural Afro-descendant population (27 million) represents more than 46 percent of the total rural population of Latin America (123 million).

2. The scope and biological richness of their collective territories

- Of the 2011 billion hectares of land in Latin America, indigenous peoples inhabit about 20 percent of it (404 million hectares) (Garnett *et al.*, 2018). Of this area, governments have recognized collective tenure rights of over approximately 277 million hectares, or roughly two thirds.
- More than 80 percent of the area inhabited by indigenous peoples (330 million hectares) is located in forest areas (Fa *et al.*, 2020) and, as a whole, indigenous areas represent around a third of the total forest area of Latin America (Fa *et al.*, 2020; Walker *et al.*, 2020; Saatchi *et al.*, 2011).
- Indigenous territories closely overlap with the protected areas (47 percent) (Garnett *et al.*, 2018).
- In Central America, indigenous territories represent more than 75 percent of the marine-coastal areas in the Caribbean Sea and extensive areas bordering continental waters and the Pacific Ocean. For many of them, fishing is their main livelihood.
- In total, **approximately eight million hectares of land have been granted over the last thirty years to Afro-descendants**, including about five million in Colombia, two million in Brazil and one million between Ecuador, Honduras and Nicaragua; most of them located in forest areas (Rapoport Center, 2009; Herrera Arango, 2017; RRI, 2020). There are also significant additional areas to be allocated in Colombia (outside the biogeographic Chocó region), in Ecuador and on the northern coast of Honduras, of approximately four million hectares.



Darién province, Panama.

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- If you add the entire area of the territories where the indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant tribal peoples practice forest governance, these could include between **320 and 380 million hectares**, including the areas formally recognized by the governments, and those that have not yet been recognized.

3. Ancestral knowledge that enables the sustainable management of natural resources

- Multiple studies show that, in the regions of Latin America where indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants benefit from a secure collective tenure regime for their territories, they are often the best custodians of this natural capital. A review of 130 local studies in 14 countries, jointly conducted by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), found that community-managed forests suffer less deforestation and provide greater carbon capture. Another international study showed that the areas protected by the State

suffer from deforestation four times faster than neighbouring community forests (Oxfam, 2016).

- Given the mounting scientific evidence, both the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity (IPBES) have highlighted the importance of ensuring the collective territorial rights of indigenous peoples and other traditional communities and protecting their ancestral and local knowledge to address climate change and mitigate the loss of biodiversity and agro-biodiversity (IPCC, 2019).
- However, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants still continue to face countless challenges when it comes to directly accessing financing to tackle climate change and preserve biodiversity, and their contributions are rarely reflected in the design of climate change mitigation and/or adaptation strategies.
- At the same time, there is a phenomenon common to all countries in Latin America: the rise of conflicts related to the control and use of the territory and natural resources. The primary-export sector in the region has resulted in serious environmental impacts, spatial reclassifications, and has affected the rights, interests, territories and natural assets of indigenous peoples. Recent experiences in Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico with tribal and collective ownership show promising potential for their participation in the payments for ecosystem services systems, typically known as PES.

These three points reflect the need to bring awareness to and compensate for the enormous contributions of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants to biodiversity conservation, and to work hand in hand with them in creating new climate change mitigation strategies. FAO therefore recognizes just how essential their territories and natural assets are, as well as their knowledge associated with the conservation and sustainable

use of natural biodiversity, both terrestrial and aquatic.

The following are ten scalable experiences of intercultural collaboration that demonstrate the importance of working closely with indigenous and Afro-descendant men, women and youth of the region, in the search for practical solutions that allow for synergies between ancestral knowledge and technological innovation.



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Afro-descendant farmer leader's hands.

TEN SCALABLE EXPERIENCES OF INTERCULTURAL COLLABORATION

1. Forest and land monitoring in the digital era: the exchange of knowledge between the Ngabe-Bugle People, the Emberá People and the Mbya Guaraní People

"I was born in the forest and have always lived in this remote and isolated area. My grandfather and father taught me about the forest, the plants, and how to protect and care for them. Taking care of the forest comes naturally to me. Since the forest needs me to protect it, I also need the forest to live. The combination of this ancestral knowledge with new technologies has made me a stronger protector of our indigenous forests."

Rafael Valdespino

Emberá-Wounaan indigenous leader from Panama

In November 2019, Rafael Valdespino, from the Marraganti community in the Emberá-Wounaan territory of Panama, along with a team from FAO Paraguay, FAO Panama and other partner organizations, visited four Mbya Guaraní communities, with the objective of finalizing a two-year process of capacity building for youth, leaders and community members on responsible governance of forest tenure and community monitoring processes.

With a population of 170 communities, the Mbya Guaraní of Paraguay are an important group that has managed to preserve a large part of their culture, institutions, way of life, identity,



Cornelia Flores, leader of the Isla Jovai Teju Community, Paraguay.

languages and world view, within the ever-changing landscape of Paraguay.

During the exchange between indigenous technicians from Panama and Paraguay, experiences were shared on training processes and the implementation of community forest monitoring. This South-South exchange connected them with their peers, so they could learn from one another, discuss their work, address obstacles and improve the effectiveness of their efforts. Experimental knowledge was also shared among them in their own words, creating a collaborative and peer-to-peer learning environment.

In the last two years, the Mbya Guaraní communities have benefited from several training experiences, in which technicians learned about monitoring the territories. This has also strengthened the autonomous livelihood systems of these communities. At the same time, the FAO technical team worked with partner institutions and communities to develop internal

standards and procedures to better manage natural resources, based on community development plans.

“We received great feedback from the community of Jovai Teju. They are truly committed to the process and are ready to move forward on this. We worked with the communities for several years and, through a participatory process, have formulated a plan for the territory. This plan examines how best to combine forest protection with ensuring food security in these communities,” states Petrona Fretes, head of the Department of Support to Indigenous Communities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG).

The initiative was supported by the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INDI) of Paraguay, the National Forestry Institute (INFONA), the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADES), the National Institute for Rural Development and Land (INDERT), the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) and the municipalities.

Participants of the workshop held with the community of San Juan, Caacguazú, Paraguay.





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Drone launch by Rafael Valdespino, Emberá-Wounaan indigenous leader from Panama.

“I want to continue to help my territory, my region, to help protect our forests and our environment from things like extensive livestock farming. I want to support the protection of forests on a larger scale, and I look forward to sharing my knowledge and skills with other young people, so that they can expand on this work in their respective territories,” Valdespino stated.

Drone monitoring can generate information all year round, even in the rainy season, since it is possible to fly them below the clouds. Drone flights also enable monitoring of forest fires, land encroachment and crop monitoring, among other things. This allows for better management of natural resources in indigenous territories. Training for representatives from the indigenous communities addressed the development of flight plans, drone assembly and maneuvering, field data collection, image processing and mapping with high-resolution images.

Sources: FAO, 2016A; FAO, 2016B; Ruiz-Jaen, 2019.

2. Fuerza de las Mujeres Wayúu (FMW) and agroclimatic risk management in La Guajira

"Our water source is a tiny speck of water, it is drop by drop, a trickle that is running dry."

Wayúu indigenous leader from the Zahino reservation

The province of La Guajira, on the border of Colombia with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is a dry region with desert landscapes. The aridity of the land and the increasingly extreme climatic patterns, together with other socioeconomic challenges, have created adverse conditions for the Wayúu People in terms of farming and raising livestock. As a result, many indigenous communities are highly vulnerable to food insecurity.

Within the framework of inter-agency coordination in the Department of La Guajira in northern Colombia, Oxfam, in partnership with FAO and Fuerza de Mujeres Wayúu (FMW), carried out a rapid needs assessment in 22 rural communities, primarily those of Wayúu ethnicity affected by the mixed migration flow. The exercise incorporated the approach of 'do no harm' (to avoid generating expectations and anxiety in the communities, where they are often consulted repeatedly by various actors) and aimed to identify inclusive actions that could lead to responses with greater impact; based on the complementarity of the partner organizations, especially in water and sanitation, the promotion of hygiene and food security.

Sutsuin Jiyeyu Wayúu (Fuerza de Mujeres Wayúu) plays an important role in advocacy and dialogue with the communities, for the design and implementation of humanitarian assistance. This organization was created in 2006, through collaboration between the different communities and associations of the

Wayúu People, with the aim of defending their territories, calling attention to human rights violations, and promoting women's rights and ethnic rights in the Department of La Guajira.

Information collected during the rapid assessment shows that 64 percent of men and women consulted consider the scarcity of water for human consumption to be a critical problem in the community. The lack of access to water, although an ongoing issue in the region, has been exacerbated in recent years due to the fact that, between 2014 and 2016, the El Niño phenomenon caused a rainfall shortage of over 78 percent in the Department; a situation that continues to affect the Wayúu People.

In turn, the food shortage reported in 19 communities and the lack of basic resources mentioned in 10 communities allows us to verify the impact of the migration crisis. In 73 percent of the communities visited, the women in the focus groups stated that they themselves were in charge of carrying the water, either

Wayúu women gathered for a group discussion of local issues.



alone or accompanied by their children. Although 64 percent of families in La Guajira have access to land, water resources are scarce and water points are damaged and poorly maintained. Half of the population are economically vulnerable, spending more than 65 percent of their incomes on food.

Based on this assessment and other sources of information, the FAO Early Warning Early Action team, together with the FAO Colombia office, launched various projects and programs to boost food production and improve water resources management, involving the following actions:

- Installation of water supply infrastructure for human consumption and water supply required for agricultural production.
- Implementation of organizational mechanisms for community management of risks related to water supply infrastructure and agricultural production systems.
- Recovery and rehabilitation of multifamily or community-based agricultural production systems, with a focus on agro-climatic risk management.
- Increase of family and community technical capacities for agroclimatic risk management, and building resilience in agricultural production in the context of extreme and prolonged drought.

The community approach presented here requires specialized knowledge to ensure appropriate actions for individuals and groups; generating relationships based on trust and empathy, recognizing their needs, interests, abilities, narratives and backgrounds, as well as their expectations and particular socio-cultural constructs, especially in the case of indigenous communities. Incorporating a rights-based, gender and diversity perspective, the Do No Harm approach and a psychosocial approach are all part of a preparation process, conducted prior to the methodological development of a needs assessment.



©FAO/Jorge Mahecha

Wayúu women from the community of Guayabal, Municipality of Uribe, La Guajira, Colombia.

This is relevant for the implementation of projects in any indigenous community that has interdisciplinary teams with an ethnic perspective, in order to facilitate the processes based on the co-construction of knowledge.

Source: Oxfam, FAO and FMW, 2019.

3. Alianza de Pescadores Indígenas Centroamericanos (APICA – Alliance of Central American Indigenous Fishers)

Indigenous peoples live with and share a vital connection to aquatic ecosystems, which are an essential part of their cultural heritage, along with promoting food sovereignty (the right to have access to healthy and culturally appropriate food). In many cases, aquatic ecosystems provide their main source of income. In Mesoamerica, indigenous peoples live in more than 75 percent of the coastal marine zones in the Caribbean Sea and extensive areas bordering the continental waters and the Pacific Ocean, relying on fishing as their main livelihood. It should be mentioned that, in the region, the territories they inhabit have the highest indicators of poverty and malnutrition.

Artisanal fisherman launches his net.





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Afro-descendant family farmer, Darién province, Panama.

Factors such as weak land-use planning, industrialization, climate change, the absence of policy linkages within a “free, prior and informed” consultation model, among other things, are threatening their ancestral cultural practices, the ecosystems of their territories, and their food sources, including fishing, leaving them in a situation of extreme vulnerability.

As a result of the participatory and collaborative process between the Indigenous Council of Central America (CICA), the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC), FAO and the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (SICA-OSPESCA), the **Alliance of Central American Indigenous Fishers** was created in August 2019, in order to strengthen the role of indigenous peoples, support their fishing practices and promote good governance of fishery and associated resources.

As a guiding tool, the partnership refers to the **Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication** (FAO, 2018a), an international instrument that provides principles of consensus and guidance on how to address small-scale fisheries issues.

Through the network, comprised of various actors, the aim is to improve the adoption of policies and programs tailored to the needs and cultures of indigenous peoples, in addition to strengthening the governance of small-scale fisheries in indigenous territories and communities of the Mesoamerican region, as well as promoting their sustainability.

Characteristics of indigenous fishing practices in Central America

Self-subsistence as a driving force. Most experiences revolve around a subsistence economy and support culturally specific dietary habits. Nevertheless, there are fishing practices whose products are typically sold in the export market.

It is artisanal. This is one of the defining characteristics and is a determining factor in the socioeconomic and cultural challenges of providing ongoing support and capacity building.

Generational transfer of know-how. There is a common thread that keeps their culture alive, given that the methods of fishing have been, and continue to be, passed down from generation to generation in an experience-based and dynamic way. Future efforts must therefore respect and consider the importance of this practice for any actions focused on capacity building and development.

The connection with cultural practices. Fishing practices are not isolated from their cultural practices. On the contrary, they are in harmony and closely aligned with the set of practices that the communities and indigenous peoples employ in their daily life.

Greater participation of women. Women are recognized for their high level of participation in various fishing practices, including a high degree of mastery of the activity, with complementarity between men and women in all aspects of fishing. However, it is well known that in some cases, women are paid less for their work than men, and in other cases, their participation is rendered invisible.

The importance of local knowledge systems and local

know-how. It should be emphasized that in the practices identified, local and ancestral knowledge, with its own knowledge management resources, is a decisive factor and shapes their actions and decision making.

Territoriality. Cultural practices are carried out in a spatial environment, the ancestral territory itself. There are ancestral practices that take place outside the territory delimited by the States, but which are recognized as part of their ancestral right. There are conflicts between indigenous peoples and governments over the use of natural resources and regulations imposed by the latter, as well as conflicts over environmental contamination and changes in the landscape that affect access to fishery resources and well-being.

Their own fishing rules. Each experience reports the existence of a particular set of fishing rules, where what is most notable is that each group takes on responsibility and is empowered to decide on the rules, enforce them and sanction when necessary, within their respective governance mechanisms.

Source: Brenes-Castillo and Pulgarín-Rodríguez, 2020.

4. The Community Council of the Yurumanguí River Basin in Buenaventura, Colombia

"To me, the forest is part of what gives us life, gives us food, gives us money... the forest gives us all those things, without the forest there would be nothing."

Pascualino Caicedo

"Oh when the forests were gone,
oh mother, it did not rain again...aeee.
Oh my river became stone aeee,
the dense forest was no longer there aeee."

Yurumanguireña song excerpt

"So if we cut down the forests, we won't see the river again."

Efrén Cangá

The Yurumanguí river basin is a physical space where nature is manifested in all its aesthetic and productive complexity, generously providing different types of ecosystems and ecological dynamics that have made it a constant presence throughout time, and which today continues to provide the best living conditions for a community that has been living in harmony with it, in a process of joint evolution over time. The Black community of the Yurumanguí river basin has traditionally lived in the territory since the mid-sixteenth century, beginning with the introduction of Black slaves brought over from Africa to work in mining in the upper part of the basin. Over time, and with greater momentum after the abolition of slavery, they began to build their settlements along the river until they formed the twelve rural districts that exist today, located in three territorial areas.

The ancestral territory of the Community Council of the Yurumanguí river basin is collective in nature, and is led by

a community government that is made up of a Leadership Council, local committees and thematic task forces. By holding a collective land title, recognized by resolution number 1131 of 23 May 2000 and issued by the administration of the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA), in accordance with Law 70/93, there is a single property comprised of 54 776 ha of the 63 427 ha that belongs to the basin, which is located throughout the entire area: the upper, middle and lower Yurumanguí river basin. Around 3 800 people live in the collective territory.

Since 2018, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Minambiente), FAO, and the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) have been providing technical assistance to this community to formalize the sustainable forest management (SFM) or community forestry on their land, in line with national regulations, as well as expanding training opportunities to strengthen their technical and community capacities in order to improve this process (Yepes *et al.*, 2020). In addition, work is being done to improve their livelihoods, based on

Community forestry pilot project in Yurumanguí.



the recognition of this traditional activity that they have carried out for many years, and which has led to the effective conservation of its forests and has contributed to climate change mitigation (Cabrera *et al.*, 2018).

The model of SFM employed by the communities in Yurumanguí contributes to the integration of culture, nature and the community with its bioeconomy (Viviescas *et al.*, 2020), as well as to the preservation of ancestral traditions, with the technical component an added value, along with territorial development. This model has helped in the conservation of forests, the diversity of these ecosystems and their preservation for future generations.

In essence, the community forestry model identified in Yurumanguí is primarily based on: (i) the legal harvesting of 10 wood species, authorized by the regional environmental authority (Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca), through a harvesting permit that benefits approximately 44 families who depend on this activity, including 34 women, 55 men and 19 young people between 14 and 16 years old; ii) the harvesting of non-wood forest products (NWFPs) that could directly benefit 21 artisans, mostly older adults (men and women) who traditionally use these products to make handicrafts and tools for their daily lives, but which could be commercialized by enabling the necessary conditions for this activity (e.g. permits, market research and liaising with potential buyers); and (iii) community monitoring, which is being carried out mainly by youth in the community, in particular the Los Laureles Ecological Group of the San Antonio rural district, made up of around 60 children and young people. These youth, in addition to environmental education activities, are committed to working with “wood cutters” to establish nurseries for native species and restore areas degraded by third parties in their territories, and to receive traditional knowledge passed down to them from their elders, primarily women.



©FAO/Ana Reyes

Member of the Yurumanguí community taking measurements for community forest management.

During the two years of joint work between the community, Minambiente, FAO and IDEAM, it was possible to strengthen forest governance and social capital. By bringing together wood cutters, artisans and ecological groups, who previously operated separately, the work of everyone involved in conserving and sustainably managing the forests and their resources has been recognized. However, the men of the community in particular have made progress in recognizing the important role that women and youth have in community forest management, which is part of their well-being. The relationship and joint work with the Regional Autonomous Corporation of Valle del Cauca and the Ministry of the Environment has also been improved, providing them with training on the regulations for legal harvesting, the use of the National Single Online Permit (SUNL), and other required regulatory procedures. With IDEAM, they have worked to identify the causes and perpetrators of deforestation and land degradation in their territory and, for now, national analyses have shown a reduction in these practices as a result of strengthening their territorial

governance. Finally, something that seemed impossible became a reality last year: with the support of the UN-REDD and EU-FAO FLEGT programmes, the Yurumanguí community council negotiated and sold a batch of timber at a fair price and without intermediaries, in the middle of the Covid-19 quarantine, to a company called Red Faisán, which manufactures musical instruments. Although work still remains to achieve sustainability and profitability in the process, the progress made in Yurumanguí is a prime example of good forest governance and is a process that can be replicated and scaled-up in other communities in the country that want to formalize their activities and improve their livelihoods, through the recognition of their role as guardians of the forests. However, Yurumanguí, like many communities in the Colombian Pacific, faces several external threats that put the territory at risk and intensifies vulnerability to climate change (Suárez *et al.*, 2018).

More information:

Community Forestry Video. FAO. 2019. Community forestry, a tool to strengthen local economies in Colombia. Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2hFNl9nKdg&t=380s>

Community Forestry. <https://www.minambiente.gov.co/index.php/bosques-biodiversidad-y-servicios-ecosistematicos/gobernanza-forestal/foresteria-comunitaria>

Exchange of experiences of Community Forest Management in Latin America: progress and challenges. <https://youtu.be/defykB7yM5A>

Community forest management model in Yurumanguí. <https://nacionesunidas.org.co/Publicaciones-FAO/Forester%C3%ADa-Comunitaria/Forester%C3%ADa%20Comunitaria%20Valle%20del%20Cauca.pdf>

Film: Mi Río Yurumanguí. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI3ARXQrywk>

5. Leadership schools for indigenous women

Indigenous women and girls are among the most vulnerable within indigenous communities, facing threefold discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status¹.

However, indigenous women are not vulnerable by nature. Discrimination, inequality and the systematic lack of respect for their individual and collective rights place them in situations of vulnerability. In particular, the lack of recognition of their right to self-determination, their knowledge and their connection to land, territories and natural resources means that indigenous women face other types of challenges. However, for hundreds of years, indigenous women have played a key role in the preservation of their peoples' livelihoods, languages, food systems, world views and territories.

In 2015, FAO and the International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIWF) joined forces to design a development program, based on the methodology used by IIWF and centered on recognizing the existing leadership capacities of indigenous women. In addition to focusing on capacity building on women's and indigenous peoples' rights, this initiative would provide tools and technical expertise for indigenous women leaders in the areas of food security, advocacy, land and natural resource governance, among other issues.

With this approach, since 2015, FAO has been working in collaboration with IIWF and other indigenous organizations to implement 12 more editions of the program. More than 330 indigenous women leaders have participated in regional editions

¹ In fact, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has highlighted some of the main problems faced by indigenous women: high levels of poverty, low levels of education and illiteracy, limited access to health, basic sanitation, credit and employment, limited participation in political life, and the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence.

in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and in national editions held in Paraguay, Panama, El Salvador, Peru, India and the Philippines. This model is characterized by the collaboration between three implementing entities: an indigenous organization, a government entity and FAO.

Based on a common agenda, each edition of the Indigenous Women's Leadership School is adapted to their respective realities, context and priorities in that region or country. In general, the program is implemented through an intensive two-week face-to-face seminar, followed by a stage that includes the preparation of advocacy plans by the participants.

In the year 2020, within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SUNU indigenous organization, the Paraguayan Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INDI) and FAO adapted the methodology for the Indigenous Women's Leadership Schools to a completely virtual model. As a result, 25 indigenous women leaders from different indigenous communities of Paraguay were able to

Participants in the Global Indigenous Women's Leadership School. South America.
Training of trainers in human rights, food security and nutrition.



participate in the 6-week training course by connecting from their respective locations. This methodology, as well as the model of Indigenous Women's Leadership Schools, has been adopted by INDI to continue implementing the initiative.

“When we talk about women and food security, we have to realize that women are vital when it comes to food production. We are the ones who produce and prepare what is necessary to feed our families. We are convinced that at home, we should eat our own food that we've produced. We indigenous peoples are not poor. On the contrary, we are very rich because we have nature and it is very much alive,” said Judith Paucar, from the province of Puno, Peru.

FAO is currently conducting an online virtual consultation to reformulate the leadership school modules for indigenous women, based on input from various organizations representing indigenous peoples.

Sources: FAO, 2017a, 2017b and n.d.

Four key observations about indigenous women

- They face broad discrimination that affects all aspects of life and exacerbates inequalities.
- In general, they have lower levels of education and literacy compared to indigenous men, which results in limited access to political participation and decision-making spaces.
- They are protectors of traditional indigenous knowledge guardians of seeds and custodians of biodiversity.
- Indigenous women are steadfast in demanding social and gender equality and respect for the rights and way of life of indigenous peoples.

Indigenous woman preparing cassava in her community in La Paya National Park, Putumayo, Colombia.



“Silla Violeta” (Violet Chair) initiative for indigenous women

As part of the Global Campaign for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women, led by FAO, IILW and the News Agency of Indigenous and Afro-descendant Women (NOTIMIA) since 2018, the “Violet Chair” initiative (#IndigenousWomen) has been consolidated as a symbol of the political participation of indigenous women.

The “Violet Chair” is an appeal to the authorities, policy makers, organizations, the international community, academia and civil society to ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous women in policy debates and decision-making processes that affect them and their communities.

To raise awareness, a violet chair is placed at each meeting to highlight the participation of an indigenous woman, or – all too often – to denounce her absence when the chair is left empty.

“Placing a violet chair at a meeting is a simple but effective reminder that indigenous women must have a seat at the table, where policies that affect indigenous communities are being discussed,” stated Marcela Villarreal, director of FAO’s Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division.

Violet has become a symbolic color that represents women's voices being heard. More than 95 organizations around the world have joined this campaign, and hundreds of indigenous women have adopted and used this symbol to demand their right to political participation. Indigenous paints, fabrics or handicrafts can be used to create a violet chair and support the campaign.

Source: FAO, 2018b.

Indigenous women campaign, violet chair in the Kuna indigenous community of Púculo, Darién province, Panama.



6. Territorial governance through community monitoring: the case of the Community Council of Black Communities (COCOMASUR) Acandí, Colombia

“We did what no one else was doing at the time, which is advocate for the technical process to become simplified, and for the community process to be elevated to a technical level. For example, now we write down the things we do... To have the scientists come in and discuss different strategies for the community, in order to understand and compare the different types of knowledge, was quite a powerful innovation.”

Everildys Córdoba

Legal representative of the Community Council of Black Communities of the Tolo River Basin and Southern Coastal Zone – COCOMASUR

The collective and ancestral territory of COCOMASUR is located on the Tolo river basin and the southern coastal area of the municipality of Acandí, Department of Chocó. 480 families belong to this council of Black Communities, or approximately 2 173 people, who received the title for the collective property from INCODER in 2005. They are comprised of nine local councils, and each elects its local leadership council, in which the members represent their communities in the General Assembly. In turn, for the purposes of territorial administration, they elect the Leadership Council of the Greater Council, of which the chairperson is the legal representative (Córdoba *et al.*, 2018).

Since 2005, through its organizational structure, the leaders of COCOMASUR have been making key decisions towards achieving the proposed objective for the titled land and, at the same time, ensuring the subsistence and permanence of the families in the territory. This has involved significant effort and

commitment from the community, and the dedication of men and women who saw in the collective titling the opportunity to work towards reintegrating the community. They succeeded, on their own accord and voluntarily, in obtaining the designation of an area to conserve and protect the forests, its biodiversity and the community within the collective territory. This process involved defining commitments to continue strengthening the communities at the grassroots level, implementing administrative processes, taking inventory and monitoring the natural resources of the territory (Córdoba *et al.*, 2018).

In order to monitor natural resources as a community, it is necessary to travel throughout the territory, raise community awareness, report incidents to the relevant authorities, and learn how to collect and systematize information; but above all, to take ownership of the territory in order to take care of it with a sense of pride. This exercise of surveillance and oversight to monitor natural resources is what the Community Council of Black Communities of the Tolo River Basin and the Southern

Returning from community forest monitoring in Acandí, Chocó.



Coastal Zone (COCOMASUR), in the municipality of Acandí, Chocó, aims to improve year after year, with the support of the institutions and partners that involved in their work, to rescue their cultural identity and the organized management of the territory (Córdoba *et al.*, 2018).

Before the arrival of the “Chocó-Darién Conservation Corridor” project in 2010, the first to sell carbon credits in the voluntary carbon market under REDD+, the community council members understood monitoring as “a way of watching or observing something,” because they were unaware of the methodologies or the importance of recording or synthesizing what they were watching or observing. *“After several years (6) of working on trying to modernize community knowledge and make the technical aspects simple and accessible, we understood that with this form of monitoring or observing something, we could detect logging threats, report cases, follow up on them, create databases and, above all, better understand and appreciate the natural resources that we have in the territory.”* After creating the “Chocó-Darién Conservation Corridor,” two additional areas in the territory were included in the Collective and Ancestral territory of COCOMASUR: one at the regional level, the Regional District of Integrated Management (DRMI), La Playona and Loma de la Caleta; and another at the national level, the Acandí Playón and Playona Wildlife Sanctuary (SFAPP). Throughout the declaration processes, the community made use of their right to prior consultation, actively participating in the decision-making process, which strengthened the commitment to conserve, protect and monitor the conservation objectives in each area.

Since 2018, within the framework of the UN-REDD Colombia national program, COCOMASUR has been working jointly with the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) and FAO on the issues of community monitoring, as well as coordinating with the Forest and Carbon Monitoring System (SMByC) of IDEAM. This has been done through exchanges in which COCOMASUR has shared their process with, and provided training to, other



cocomasur women share their experiences regarding REDD+ at the meeting of Afro-descendant leaders in the Colombian Pacific.

community councils of the Colombian Pacific. (Yepes *et al.*, 2018a). In addition, they conducted a systematization of the monitoring processes in a booklet, to serve as a reference for other communities (Córdoba *et al.*, 2018). They were also highly involved in the review and contributions of the proposed guidelines for participatory community monitoring in Colombia and its coordination with the National Forest Monitoring System (Yepes *et al.*, 2018B), and took the lead on creating the technical committee on community monitoring. The committee is currently led by IDEAM and is comprised of more than 20 communities in the country, dedicated to community monitoring as a mechanism for territorial governance and the use, management and conservation of natural forests in the country. As one of the first communities to validate IDEAM's nationally generated data on deforestation, COCOMASUR used national mapping to carry out its local monitoring and save on the costs incurred within the REDD+ Chocó – Darién project (Yepes *et al.*, 2018a). COCOMASUR is also currently part of the community forestry program of

the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Minambiente), which receives direct assistance from FAO, through which they aim to improve the conditions of wood cutters, as well as prevent third parties from depleting their forests through the illegal logging and extensive cattle ranching that threatens their territory (Suárez *et al.*, 2018).

More information:

COCOMASUR Ancestral Collective. <https://www.cocomasur.org/>

Enhancing forest monitoring in local communities. Voices from Colombia: COCOMASUR.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8o-wdZvnSjk&t=195s>

Proposal of guidelines for participatory community monitoring in Colombia and its coordination with the National Forest Monitoring System.

<http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/I9584ES/>

7. The Huilliche People and Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) program is based on the understanding that throughout history, humans, including indigenous peoples, have ensured their own survival by domesticating plants and animals while adapting to harsh environments. Generations of indigenous peoples have developed and passed down traditional systems capable of overcoming adverse climatic conditions, geographic and political isolation, and scarcity of material goods, such as natural resources or government subsidies. The GIAHS program aims to recognize agricultural heritage sites of global importance. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to the preservation of local agricultural systems (including indigenous peoples) and their landscapes, biodiversity and associated knowledge and cultural systems.

Cecilia Guineo Colguen, chilota huilliche, guardian of ancestral seeds, shows the potatoes she is growing (Chiloé, Chile).





©INDAP Chile

Huilliche potato farmer in Chiloé, Chile.

One of the most important GIAHS pilot sites is the island of Chiloé, in the lake region of Chile. Chiloé has a wealth of biodiversity, whose temperate rainforests are home to a wide range of endangered flora and fauna. These resources provide the local population with food, medicines, dyes and other items necessary for their physical and cultural well-being. The indigenous Huilliche peoples who live in the area still cultivate around 200 varieties of native potatoes, following ancestral practices passed down verbally by generations of farmers, almost always women. However, their livelihoods are threatened by ongoing marginalization, the lack of land titles and environmental degradation caused by forest concessions, contaminated water and unchecked tourism. New income-generating activities, such as intensive fish farming in the island's lakes and in the inland sea, are causing a significant outflow of male and female labor from the agricultural sector, with the ensuing shift away from traditional agricultural practices. These changes jeopardize the biodiversity

conservation activities, which are beneficial not only for the Chilote People but also for global genetic diversity.

The GIAHS program provides support in the design of policies for resource conservation, the establishment of institutions tasked with upholding sustainable practices, and carries out awareness-raising campaigns at the local and national levels.

Since the GIAHS designation, local products have received a certification label to ensure added value in the market. Today, 30 indigenous producers have received the certification for culinary tourism. In turn, more than 20 traditional food recipes have been recovered and preserved.

Network of Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (NIAHS)

Another ongoing initiative in Chile since 2018, the Network of Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (NIAHS) is a joint project between the Ministry of Agriculture in Chile and FAO, with the purpose of safeguarding the country's agro-biodiversity and cultural values. This project directly addresses indigenous territories and lands from Northern and Southern Chile.

The Network of Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems was created as a result of intersectoral work led by the Ministry of Agriculture, through the Agrarian Research and Policy Office (ODEPA), the National Institute for Agricultural Development (INDAP), with the technical support of FAO. The Network is co-financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the National Forest Corporation (CONAF).

The aim of the project is the conservation and sustainable use of crop species for food security and adaptation to climate change, as well as the recognition of practices and knowledge preserved by family farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities for the sustainable management of natural resources.

Wildlife and traditional crops of fruit trees, vegetables and medicinal plants, such as quinoa, chili, pumpkin and beans, as well as ancestral practices, such as flood irrigation in terrace farming, conservation techniques and participatory seed multiplication, are on the way to becoming elements to preserve and protect. The initial phase of the project involves twelve municipalities in the regions of Arica and Parinacota, Tarapacá, Antofagasta, Biobío and Araucanía.

8. Capacity building for access to climate finance

The Government of Nicaragua, FILAC and FAO formed a partnership that seeks to strengthen the role of the indigenous peoples from Latin America and the Caribbean in the various climate financing schemes.

This partnership contributes to the commitments of the 107th United Nations General Assembly, which adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (articles 39 and 41), to guarantee the right of indigenous peoples to access to financial assistance in order to tackle climate change.

In March 2018, the Indigenous Peoples Policy of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was adopted by its Leadership Council. This marks a milestone in the role of indigenous peoples in the different stages of the GCF project cycle. The main objective of the policy is to provide a structure in order to ensure that the

Afro-descendant family farmers, Darién province, Panama.



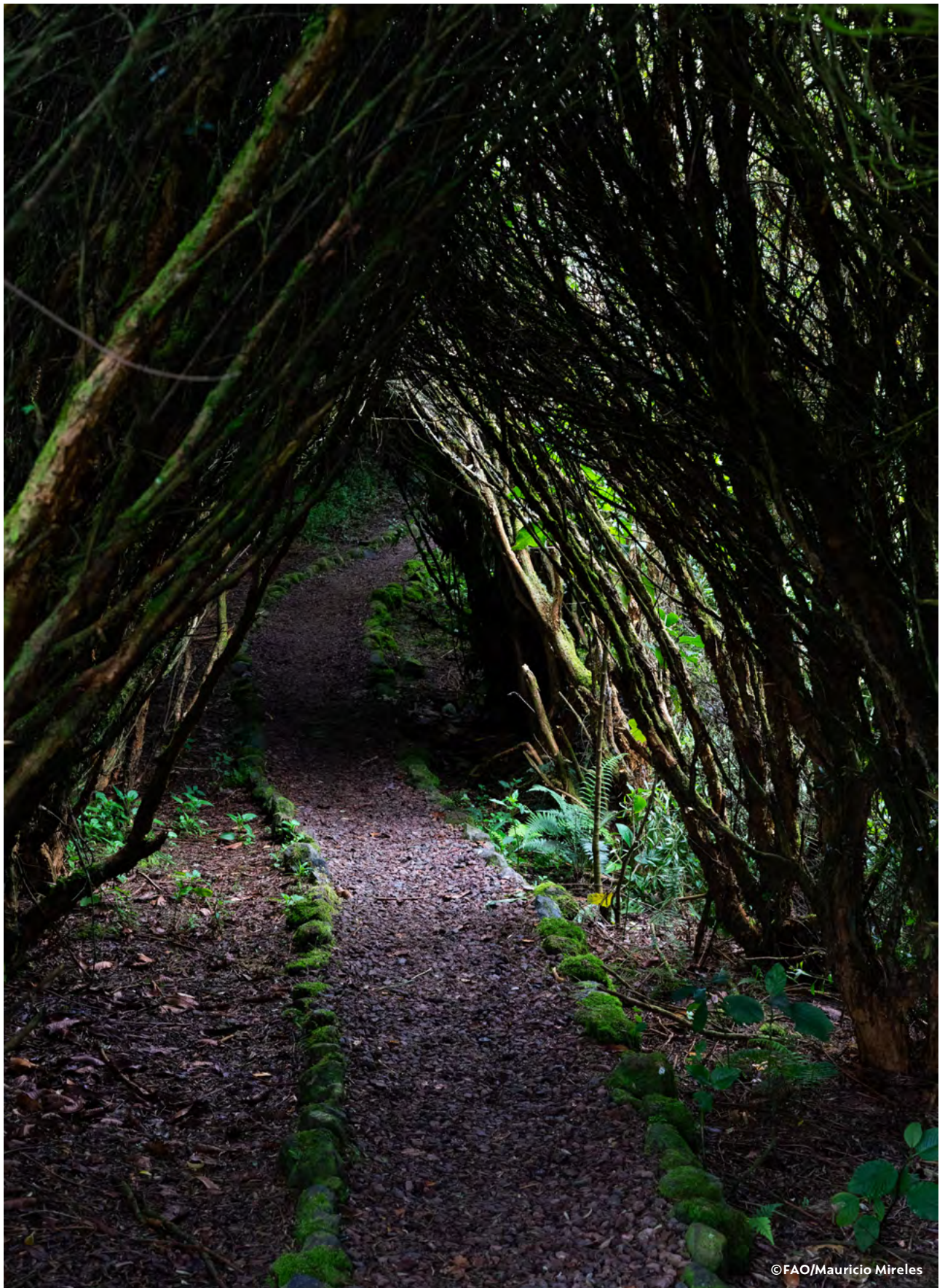
activities of the GCF are developed and implemented in such a way as to promote the full respect, promotion and safeguarding of indigenous peoples, so that:

- i. They benefit from the GCF activities and projects in a culturally appropriate manner; and
- ii. They do not suffer any damage or become adversely affected by the design and implementation of GCF-funded activities.

In this context, the process of creating the Network of Indigenous Climate Finance Specialists was initiated as a network comprised of indigenous leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean. In the medium term, it is expected that this Network will contribute to the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities; not only in terms of multilateral climate finance, but also bilaterally, to ensure that these processes are transparent, accountable, participatory, effective, inclusive and in line with the planning and allocation of national climate funds.

As a result of the partnership, and a training course for Indigenous Climate Finance Specialists (REIFC), the first Network of Indigenous Climate Finance Specialists was created on 2 November 2018 in El Salvador, as a technical body affiliated with FILAC, within the framework of the Ibero-American Action Plan for the Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Network was founded by 17 indigenous specialists from Argentina, Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname and Uruguay, and is open to the incorporation of new members with the support of national indigenous authorities.

In accordance with the principles and commitments signed, the purpose of this body is to manage, advocate for and monitor financial flows generated within the Latin America and Caribbean region for climate change adaptation and



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Trail in the forest, Napo Province, Ecuador.

mitigation in indigenous territories. In addition, the Network of Indigenous Specialists aims to provide guidance to indigenous organizations for better integration into the climate finance structure.

It therefore follows that the future of climate funds will depend on better cooperation and coordination by various actors: indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society, governments, multilateral development banks and the private sector.

Sources: FILAC, 2018; FAO, 2019b.

9. The Kari'ña People and sustainable forest management in Imataca

The Imataca Forest Reserve (RFI), located in the southeast of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is one of the most important Areas Under Special Administration (ABRAE) in the country, with a rich natural and cultural heritage. It covers an extensive area of forest ecosystems of 3 821 900 hectares, with a great degree of biodiversity and endemic species. This territory is inhabited by the Kari'ña Indigenous People, who, according to various anthropological accounts, are descendants of the indigenous people known as the “Caribs” during the early colonial era.² The exact number of Kari'ña People living in the Imataca forest reserve (RFI) is difficult to determine with accuracy. However, it is estimated that there are between 5 000 and 6 000 people.

In this territory, SFM is promoted, implemented and evaluated through the National Forestry Company (ENAFOR), as a method to ensure the production of a variety goods and services from forest ecosystems in a sustainable and optimal manner; always preserving the values of such ecosystems. SFM was designed as a natural resource management strategy, in which forestry activities are understood in the context of ecological, economic, social and cultural interactions within a certain area or region, in the short and long term.

Through a partnership agreement between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism (MINEC) and FAO, the firm commitment and solidarity of the Kari'ña People was

² Today, the term 'Carib' is used primarily as a linguistic classification for the so-called Caribbean languages (in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, apart from *kari'ña*, *pemón*, *ye'kuana* and *yukpa* are spoken). In addition, several comparative studies of Caribbean groups have been carried out to investigate analogies and differences in settlement patterns, economic strategies and world views, among others (Basso 1977; Butt Colson 1971; Halbmayer 2010; Rivière 1984; Whitehead & Alemán 2009).



©FAO/Harrison Ruiz

Kari'ña woman preparing cassava in the community of El Cafetal.

recognized in relation to the direct allocation of a forest concession. This entails incorporating co-management as a public policy and governance strategy, applied to SFM in the forests inhabited by the country's indigenous peoples. In this context, the Ministry of Ecosocialism made a public commitment to the representatives of the Kari'ña People to sign and deliver the concession agreement for the Forest Management Unit, known as C-3 (Imataca Centro N°3).

This work was made possible thanks to the ongoing support of the project 'Sustainable Forest Lands Management and Conservation under an Eco-social Approach' (GCP/VEN/011/GFF), which, since its inception, has worked with the Kari'ña People in processes of orientation, information sharing, training and capacity building, in keeping with the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). All project components included the permanent participation of the Kari'ña communities that live in the RFI, expressed through forest co-management training and learning-by-doing, especially in



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Kari'ña woman in Botanamo plant nursery.

the following activities: the establishment and evaluation of “Rainfor” plots to estimate the stock and flow of greenhouse gases (GHG), surveys of multipurpose plots, the establishment of community nurseries, the improvement of forest plots through agroforestry systems, technical training in data collection equipment in the field, such as compasses, clinometers, tape, forest surveys (scaling through the application of the Smalian formula), as well as the application of participatory tools for the exchange of traditional knowledge.

As a governance and conservation strategy for forest resources, this initiative has achieved a higher level of commitment, incorporating the Kari’ña as leaders and co-guardians of the administration and management of their own forest resources. This way, they will be safeguarding their hunting grounds, protecting the water on which their livelihood depends, and ensuring the forest products will be harvested in a sustainable, fair and equitable manner. It should be noted that the operational forest management plans were included in the project planning phase, as well as the aspects to be addressed through the co-management and sale of forest products and NWFPs with the Kari’ña People; to be supported during project implementation and until its completion in December 2021.

10. Black Women and forests: gender mainstreaming in community forestry

"Having been born and raised in the area, we know the role that women play in forest conservation, as an integral part of the territory. We know that without the ancestral knowledge and cultural practices that we live by and pass down from generation to generation, it would not be possible to talk about forests today, because otherwise they simply would not exist."

**Black Women's Platform,
during the UN-REDD National Program workshop in 2017**

Forestry and agroforestry systems are not gender neutral. It has been widely documented that compared to men, women are often at a disadvantage for a number of interrelated cultural, socioeconomic and institutional reasons, in terms of access to and control over forest resources and the availability of economic opportunities (FAO, 2013). Gender gaps not only exist in terms of women's access to resources and opportunities for growth, but they also affect their well-being and that of their families, especially when it comes to food security (FAO, 2017; Camacho *et al.*, 2018).

Men and women also interact in a different way with the forest, in terms of access, control, knowledge, stewardship and management. Women have generally held an important role in the use and management of forests, agroecology, food security, the defense of common lands, the transmission of knowledge, health (medicinal plants), handicraft work, and certain specific knowledge. On the other hand, men are often involved as small business owners or employees in extractive activities that generate direct income, such as timber harvesting, livestock and large-scale crop farming, which in some cases are precursors to deforestation and degradation (Camacho *et al.*, 2018).



©FAO/Mauricio Mireles

Young indigenous kuna from Púculo, Darién Province, Panama.

The technical assistance process for the implementation of community forestry in Colombia (Yepes *et al.*, 2020) has been implemented since 2018 in eight departments of the country: Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Huila, Putumayo, Tolima and Valle del Cauca, in which work is carried out with smallholder farmers and producers (4), indigenous communities (2) and Afro-Colombian communities (2). These communities are traditionally characterized by the use of natural forests as economic livelihood to support their families, and for having a high rate of unmet basic needs (UBN), little government presence, and a lack of policies to manage these unique territories and their relative isolation. This reveals weak governance and oversight, which makes natural forests vulnerable to illegal mining, illicit crops, the real estate land market and the illegal timber market.

This scenario was identified during the initial stage of the technical assistance provided by FAO in the implementation of the community forestry model in Colombia, where women were no strangers to this type of situation. Some of the tools used for gender mainstreaming are those promoted by the UN-REDD national program, the Colombian government and FAO in various areas of work, which have yielded interesting and impactful results at the community level.

During the assessment, there was a lack of participation of women in decision-making on forest use and management, and very low attendance at community meetings on forestry, especially in the territories working with indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Specifically, the men did not consider the women's work to be an economic contribution, related to household care, child rearing, animal husbandry and home gardens.

There was also little recognition of women's work with NWFs acquired from ancestral and traditional knowledge, such as handicrafts and medicinal plants. These situations were the result of a lack of community empowerment experiences that



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Indigenous leader of the Bribri People, Association of Indigenous Women of Talamanca (ACOMUITA), canton of Talamanca, province of Limón, Costa Rica.

promote the participation of women in social and economic processes, thus generating a gap between men and women in the diversification of traditional forest knowledge, the economic dependence of families on the male head of household, the lack of awareness of women's skills, and the contribution of women to the social capital of a community.

At the beginning of the process, women were in the minority, with approximately 15 percent representing the total community forestry hubs. Today, women's involvement has increased to 40 percent, revealing an upward trend. After systematizing the results obtained following its application, it was possible to establish that for community forestry processes, the objective of including a gender-based approach has meant achieving a dialogue between men and women; one where the socially constructed and accepted skills of each gender are recognized and integrated, in order to attain sustainability in forest management.

Among the main results obtained from the social baseline and disaggregated by gender, the following are worth highlighting: the identification of needs and strengths of each gender in the community forestry process; the effective participation of women in local decision-making bodies in some of the centers assisted; community decision making with a gender perspective, and agreement on the tasks to be carried out; the documentation of life stories; rescuing traditional knowledge and passing it down to younger generations; as well as achieving collective recognition of the distinct roles that the two genders have traditionally held in the protection of forests and natural resources, which is necessary to give continuity to the commitment to create community forestry enterprises.

Specifically, significant experiences have been obtained that have helped to close gaps in terms of the social division of men and women, such as:

- Participation of women in decision-making for forest use and management.
- Empowerment of women to strengthen ancestral knowledge of non-wood forest products and the transfer of knowledge through community exchanges.
- Inclusion of women leaders in community forestry hubs.
- Participatory and inclusive processes that promote gender equality, not only in relation to forestry but also within the economic, community, cultural and social spheres.
- Dialogue and consensus-building processes to strengthen the social capital of each community, based on the skills and potential of both men and women.

These results are being documented in a specific manner for each of the centers, and in some cases, publications are already available (Viviescas *et al.*, 2020). Experiences have also been shared in national roundtables promoted by Minambiente, with the various partners that are leading similar exercises in other areas of the country.



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Artisan woman from the Community of San Antonio, Yurumanguí, Colombia.

CONCLUSIONS

This document has highlighted ten experiences of intercultural collaboration between indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants from Latin America and the Caribbean and FAO, which have demonstrated the enormous potential and benefits of collaborating hand in hand with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants; in the search for intercultural, scalable and sustainable solutions that enable effective climate action.

This collaboration has evolved alongside processes of dialogue and consultation, in line with the basic principles that today govern development actions with indigenous peoples, in accordance with international law, and in particular, in keeping with the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). In addition, the standards established in ILO Convention 169 have been upheld in these processes. As a fundamental principle, the Convention establishes the right to consultation and the need to incorporate indigenous knowledge and practices in all actions by the State and agencies that affect their lands and territories, their resources, and their knowledge, culture and identity.

FAO recognizes that dialogue with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, whether through their local, regional or sectoral organizations, are essential in order to learn of the climate change assessments that the indigenous peoples themselves have made, as well as the identification of their needs and demands, in order to go forward with relevant and sustainable strategies.

In this regard, FAO has sought to establish mechanisms that enable organizational strengthening, to ensure that indigenous and Afro-descendant communities establish a better rapport with local actors, agencies and the different levels of government. Through this coordinated work, the role of women and youth is also key, since both groups are highly relevant to



Colegio Académico Indígena de Sepecue (indigenous school), in the Canton of Talamanca, province of Limón, Costa Rica.



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Bri-bri indigenous woman, in the Canton of Talamanca, province of Limón, Costa Rica.

FAO, and with whom the organization has been working for years on different proposals.

Based on the findings of the experiences mentioned above, it can be concluded that, for the development of these communities and for effective climate action, it is necessary to:

- Collaborate with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, respecting their fundamental rights, recognizing and appreciating their ancestral practices and knowledge, and acknowledging their contributions to the SDGs.
- Acknowledge and appreciate the role and contribution of indigenous and Afro-descendant women to enhance their productive activities, organizational capacity and leadership.
- Define capacity building strategies, based on the priorities expressed by indigenous and Afro-descendant youth.
- Promote the recognition of collective rights to the territory, the land and the sustainable management of natural assets.

- Promote forest governance with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, supporting community forest monitoring strategies and encouraging the design and implementation of payment mechanisms for environmental services.
- Promote the design and implementation of rural development policies that are culturally relevant.
- Promote the design and implementation of specific rural development policies for –and with– indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants.

In this sense, what has become evident is that in order to ensure successful climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, the engagement and active participation of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants and their organizations are fundamental.

Indigenous fisherman, canton of Talamanca, province of Limón, Costa Rica.



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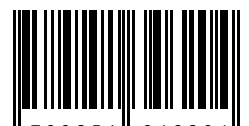
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