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Indigenous peoples' health and safety at risk due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic could have serious effects on indigenous peoples' wellbeing, livelihoods and health.

FAO urges governments, academia, NGOs, international community and indigenous peoples authorities to take specific measures that ensure the respect to indigenous peoples' rights during the pandemic and that includes an intercultural approach when dealing with the emergency, safety and health aspects of the response.

Based on the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights and on WHO messages, The FAO Indigenous Peoples Unit makes the following recommendations:

1. Under the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, FAO encourages Governments to include indigenous peoples' representatives, leaders and traditional authorities in emergency and health response committees or any entity dedicated to the COVID 19 pandemic, both during the outbreak as well as in the aftermath.
2. FAO urges the global, regional and national health instances to provide contention information and audiovisual materials to indigenous peoples and to support their translation and dissemination in indigenous languages.
3. Local indigenous communities often do not have full command of mainstream languages. To avoid communication breakdowns that will spread the disease, all main hygiene, quarantine and contention messages should be shared with the traditional leaders and youth leaders and translated into local indigenous languages.
4. Involve indigenous youth in the dissemination of COVID-19 messages within the communities both in mainstream languages as well as in local indigenous languages, their command of social media makes them a fundamental player in this situation.
5. FAO urges health entities to include in their response an intercultural approach that takes into consideration traditional indigenous health care takers, training them in all the relevant contention measures and use of equipment to stop the spreading of the virus.
6. FAO requests Governments and health organizations to include indigenous peoples' communities among the receivers of contention material such as masks, gloves, disinfectant and other contention materials.
7. FAO urges Governments to include indigenous peoples in their countries as recipients of health assistance like any other citizen of the country, including them among the population share that is tested for possible positive COVID-19 cases.

8. FAO calls to not implement any policy, programme or intervention that affects indigenous peoples without obtaining previously their Free, Prior and Informed Consent.
9. The right of Indigenous Peoples to be or remain in Voluntary Isolation must be respected
10. Several Indigenous Peoples communities have self-imposed quarantine and have established controls to limit access to their communities. These mechanisms should be respected and reinforced whenever requested.
11. FAO urges Governments to intensify protection measures to stop external farmers, settlers, private firms, industries and miners from entering indigenous peoples' territories taking advantage of the present crisis.
12. FAO has always been urging governments to stop any planned or ongoing evictions of indigenous peoples. Its call is renewed and heightened given the context of the health emergency for COVID-19.

FAO is in contact with indigenous organizations to provide assistance by sharing information about prevention and contention of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The FAO Indigenous Peoples Unit is ready to assist countries in their efforts to mitigate the pandemic's impact on indigenous peoples and to support the implementation of measures that previously discussed and agreed with indigenous peoples.