

Note on procedures and practices in respect of civil society involvement with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and its contribution to the work of the Fund¹.

Introduction

This note responds to the request of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide inputs for the upcoming Civil Society Space Report, further to Human Rights Council Resolution 31.21 adopted in June 2016. The note focuses on two categories of Civil Society Actors (CSAs), smallholder farmers and rural producers organizations, and indigenous peoples, although IFAD actively engages also with other CSAs in the areas of gender equality, migration and remittances, rural youth and land rights (the latest through the International Land Coalition hosted by IFAD).

Different to other international financial institutions and UN Specialised Agencies, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is the only international organization with a unique focus on reducing poverty and food insecurity in rural areas of developing countries. Moreover IFAD has long recognized the critical importance of social and economic empowerment of rural people living in poverty, both individually and collectively, and promoted policies and investments that enhance their capabilities and livelihoods.

A key element of its “people centred” approach is to build the capacity of grass roots institutions and organizations or foster their establishment where they are non-existent, as a means to enable IFAD target groups to attain secure access to natural resources and production services, and build their skills and knowledge to take advantage of new economic opportunities. In so doing, IFAD promotes better governance, policies and institutions for agriculture and rural development.

Using the typology proposed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)², the main Civil Society Actors (CSAs) concerned with IFAD mandate and involved in its activities are **Unions** (Farmers unions, rural producers associations and cooperatives), **Community-based groups** (indigenous peoples, minorities, rural communities), **Development NGOs** (agricultural/rural development, microfinance for financial inclusion), **Social movements, coalitions and networks** (peasants movement, right to food, rural women’s rights, landless movements and land rights NGOs) and public institutions promoting smallholders’ agricultural development (Research institutions, universities, ..).

As an International Financial Institution (IFI), IFAD provides financial assistance (mostly concessionary loans and grants) for the investment projects of its member countries. About 94% of IFAD program of loans and grant (POLG) are therefore provided exclusively to governments of sovereign states members of the Fund. It is within this IFI business model that CSAs, in particular **organizations of smallholder farmers and rural producers** and **indigenous peoples organizations**, including women and youth organizations, have been carving out their own space for voice, influence and participation.

In practice there are three main “spaces” for CSAs to engage with IFAD and contribute to its mandate: i) Country level space for **participation** in the formulation of IFAD Country Strategic Opportunities Programs

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² *A practical guide for Civil Society - Civil society space and the United Nations Human Rights system*, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

(COSOPs) and the design and implementation of IFAD funded projects; ii) Space as **direct recipient** of IFAD financial assistance supporting their own agenda and activities (mostly global/regional grants that constitute about 5% of IFAD's POLG) and iii) A unique space for **direct consultation and dialogue** with the Fund itself at corporate level: the **Farmers' Forum** and the **Indigenous Peoples' Forum**.

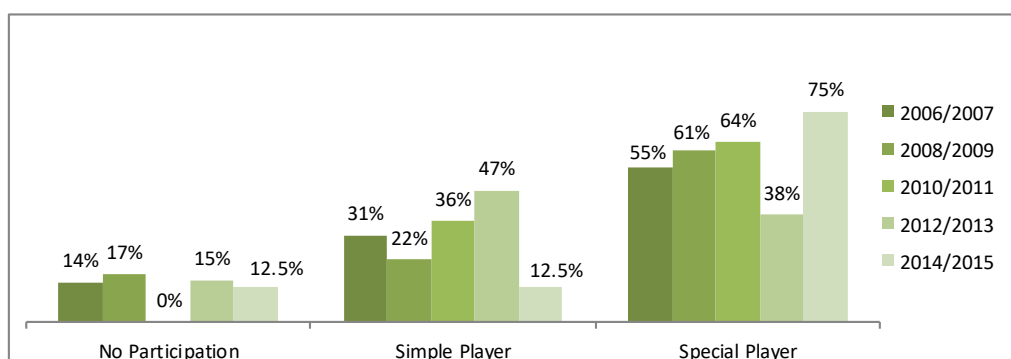
These three spaces are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. For instance CSAs accessing direct grant funding for capacity building, institutional strengthening or research and knowledge management, are often in a better position to participate in and contribute to IFAD country programs and projects. And one of the most important agenda items for the two fora (FAFO and IPFO) is to monitor and discuss progress in the two first spaces of partnership and collaboration.

I. CSAs space in IFAD country programs

The space of CSAs involvement in IFAD country programs is the most important in terms of opportunities to influence and participate in the bulk of IFAD operations on the ground. This space depends on the modalities of COSOP formulation and investment projects design that are defined jointly by the borrowing government and IFAD. The inclusiveness of this country level space and the depth of participation of CSAs vary from a country to another according to government's willingness to engage with civil society.

In practice CSAs are invited to participate in the multi-stakeholders **Country Program Management Teams** (in-country CPMTs) that discuss and review the draft COSOP documents, the aide-memoires of project design and supervision missions and the draft Project Design Reports. CPMTs are also involved in Project mid-term Reviews and Completion Reports. The majority of the members of in-country CPMTs are governmental institutions but Farmers and Rural Producers Organizations (FOs), NGOs and Research institutions are frequently involved. Over the years this participation of CSAs in COSOP and project design increased in frequency and depth. Regarding FOs participation in country programs formulation, the report of the 2016 Farmers Forum³ indicates that *"FOs participation to COSOP formulation is becoming the norm with a steady high level of participation since 2006. In the biennium 2014-2015, this trend is confirmed with 88 per cent FOs' involvement in the COSOP design. Aside for the biennium 2012-2013, another interesting trend was that FOs involvement as Special Players (special stakeholders closely involved in the formulation process) has increased over the last ten years from 55 per cent in 2006-2007 to 75 per cent in the last biennium."*

Figure 1. Evolution of Farmers and Rural Producers' Organizations participation in the IFAD COSOP formulation over 2006-2015



³ Report of the sixth global meeting of the Farmers Forum (February 2016):

<https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/83ec75bf-959b-4bfb-ab56-91b40e836a9d>

Beyond the formulation of COSOP and the design of investment projects, several categories of CSAs are also involved in project **implementation**. This is particularly the case for FOs, micro-finance institutions and community-based organizations that can be members of projects' Steering Committees or directly involved in the implementation of specific components. In 2016 IFAD conducted an assessment of its country-level partnerships with Farmers and Rural Producers Organizations in 20 countries. The analysis led to the identification of four types of country-level partnerships between IFAD and FOs. The four types have been identified according to the degree of comprehensiveness of the collaboration (strong, moderate, unbalanced and weak) and according to the quality and depth of FOs involvement (Special Player, Normal Player and simple beneficiaries):

Type A: Strong partnership between national apex FOs and IFAD in the Country Program (Guinea, Madagascar and Senegal). Partnerships with FOs in Guinea, Madagascar and Senegal are characterized by comprehensive collaboration at national level through in-depth consultations for the formulation of the COSOP. Such consultation has then unfolded into comprehensive cooperation between IFAD and FOs for the implementation of the country program. Grant and loans instruments are used complementarily. In this regard, both in Guinea and Madagascar, regional level grants (such as Support to Farmers Organization in Africa Program – SFOAP) are complemented by the support provided by members of AgriCord promoting the institutional development of FOs. The most advanced case of partnership is the one developed in Guinea, where FOs are the main strategic partner for the implementation of the country program. In both Senegal and Madagascar, the cooperation between IFAD and FOs is at an advanced stage but the FOs are not directly responsible for the implementation of IFAD country program. FOs are strategic partners for the definition of IFAD orientations and strategic priorities (at COSOP stage) and are important partners at implementation stage. This is the case mainly for Madagascar, whereby the IFAD funded project AROPA contributes to the professionalization of FOs from the grassroots to the national level. Yet in Senegal, a country characterized by a well-developed, strong FOs movement from the grassroots up to the national level, the collaboration between IFAD and FOs suffers from a disconnect between the intense national level collaboration and the uneven partnership through investment projects at local level.

Type B. Partnership between FOs and IFAD in the IFAD Country Program works relatively well (Uganda, Kenya, DR Congo, Gambia, Niger, Paraguay, Nicaragua and Brazil). The cooperation between IFAD and FOs in this subset of countries is characterized by a strong collaboration with national FOs (but not necessarily all of them) for the formulation of IFAD country strategy. Such collaboration is impacting the collaboration in implementation of the program but the approach is of working almost exclusively with FOs at local (regional and provincial) levels as key implementing partners or service providers with limited linkages to national apex FOs. In these countries, the partnership is segmented: policy and advocacy work with national FOs while the partnerships in investment projects are with local FOs with little integration between the two levels. FOs at the local level are supported by projects in their business partnership with other value chain stakeholders for specific commodities.

Type C. Strong partnership through regional grants but room for improvement in collaboration with IFAD country programs (Burundi, Argentina, Vietnam, Nepal and the Philippines). The collaboration between IFAD and FOs in this subset of countries is characterized by a disconnect between the support provided to the national apex FOs – through regional grants such as SFOAP in Africa, MTCP in Asia and participation to REAF-MERCOSUR in Latin America – and the limited involvement of FOs in the design and implementation of IFAD funded projects at country level. National apex FOs are involved only to a limited extent in the formulation of IFAD country strategy resulting into lack of involvement of FOs at the various stages of IFAD programs. This is then resulting in partnership with FOs as simple service providers (although in few cases that level of disconnect can be attributed to the fact that FOs engage only at policy level and not into the provision of economic services to their members).

Type D. Weak partnership between FOs and IFAD in Country Program (Morocco, China, Bosnia and Colombia). "Cooperation" between FOs and IFAD country program is limited to beneficiaries or service providers' roles without involving them in the definition of IFAD country strategy. Such limited collaboration is a function of limited consideration of FOs by IFAD, the limited development of national level FOs able to represent smallholders and/or almost exclusive engagement of FOs into business initiatives with limited capacity to engage in shaping IFAD priorities in the country.

Within IFAD operations at country level a particular space and process is reserved for **indigenous peoples**, based on the principle of **Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)**. The size and nature of IFAD-financed projects and its attention to targeting, participatory approaches, community development, empowerment and inclusion, have enabled IFAD to naturally follow a proactive approach to supporting indigenous peoples. Differently from most other international financial institutions, which apply a "do-no-harm" approach, **IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples** is of a proactive nature, and includes the principle of FPIC. IFAD Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) outlines an operational framework for integrating social, environmental and climate aspects into IFAD operations. FPIC is among the mandatory elements set out in the SECAP, whenever IFAD-funded projects are likely to affect land access and use rights of local communities, and whenever projects targets indigenous peoples or rural areas that are home to indigenous peoples. IFAD is the first international financial institution to adopt FPIC as an operational principle in its policy documents. FPIC of local communities on public development initiatives that may affect their rights, access to land, resources and livelihoods has become an IFAD operational principle through its policies on Improving Access to Land and Tenure Security (2008) and Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (2009). The principle is also included in the IFAD Policy on Environment and Natural Resource Management (2011). The [How to do Note on Seeking Free, Prior and Informed Consent](#) developed by IFAD in 2015 offers practical guidance for IFAD staff, consultants and in-country partners for soliciting FPIC in the design and implementation of IFAD-funded projects, in compliance with IFAD policies. The note builds on IFAD's long-term experience with participatory and community-based development, and shows how FPIC is a vehicle to ensuring community ownership and the sustainability of interventions.

IFAD policies and procedures ensure consultation and participation and consent at all stages, including in the design of Country Strategic Opportunities Programs (COSOPs) and projects. FPIC is ensured through an ongoing process of consultation and participation, which aims at building trust with the communities, their organizations and governance institutions. In its engagement, IFAD often goes beyond mere 'consent' based on a 'yes or no approach'. Participation and inclusion frequently take the form of co-management, where communities and leaders establish priorities through a demand-driven approach. In Nicaragua, indigenous leaders participated in COSOP and project stakeholder meetings. Design processes included visits to indigenous communities and interviews with leaders, as established in the inception and design phases of IFAD-funded projects. In Mexico, the COSOP design team followed-up on the commitment - taken during the first meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD - to consult indigenous peoples in the preparation of COSOPs. This has been achieved through a dedicated meeting with indigenous peoples' representatives under the leadership of the Mexican Member of the UNPFII. In the Andean region, projects differentiate strategies to deliver to different target groups. In the case of indigenous peoples, *concurso* (calls for proposals) are launched to enable communities to develop and apply for support to self-initiated projects.

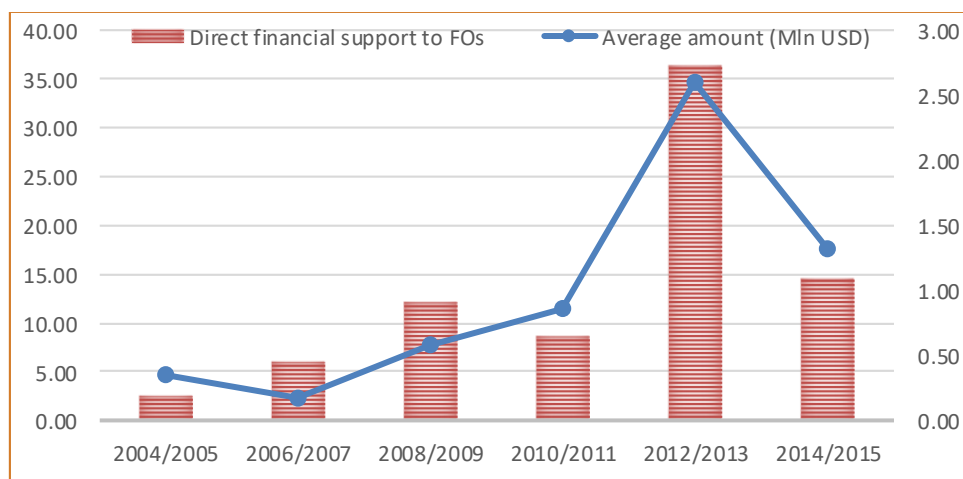
The IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples establishes that indigenous peoples' communities participate in determining priorities and strategies for their own development. To this end, IFAD shall support the participation of indigenous peoples' communities in the preparation of Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes (COSOPs) and throughout the project cycle. Participation and consultation of indigenous peoples' communities and their representatives is embedded in the COSOPs and projects cycles. Meetings and consultations with the communities are held from the initial stage of design. In order to improve design of COSOPs and projects, IFAD promotes participation of indigenous peoples' experts in the design teams.

II. CSA space in accessing direct funding from IFAD

Direct access to financial resources are important for CSAs to strengthen their capacities, implement their strategies and fulfil their representation and advocacy role in the space they have been engaging at local, national and international levels. About 6% of IFAD POLG (about USD 60 million per year) is available under the IFAD grant program which is the main financial instrument the Fund can use to directly support non-state actors (the other instrument being Supplementary Funds managed by the Fund). Direct access to IFAD grant funding has been one of the first request of smallholder farmers organizations participating in the Farmers Forum at IFAD.

Direct financial support to FOs by IFAD has constantly increased over the last decade and all FOs proposals for direct financing over the last four years were approved. The analysis of direct financial support to FOs over 2004-2015 reveals the following trends. The approach of consolidating direct support to FOs with fewer, larger, and more strategic grant financing at regional level is confirmed. In addition, the analysis of the volume of direct support to FOs needs to be analyzed considering an average 5-year period since the regional grants have an average duration of 4.5 years. This approach is accompanied by an alliance of like-minded donors supporting the Support to Farmers Organizations in Africa Program (SFOAP) and the Medium Term Cooperation Program with FOs in Asia (MTCP). With these two programmes, a total of USD 37 million has been leveraged by IFAD over the past four years corresponding to USD 7.4 million per year over a programme period of 5 years.

Figure 2: Evolution of direct financial support to FOs and average amount (USD)



The **IFAD Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF)**, is a specific funding instrument established at IFAD in 2006, that indigenous communities can use to find their own solutions to the challenges they face. It supports indigenous peoples in their self-driven development by funding small projects up to US\$ 50,000 that build on their culture, identity, knowledge and natural resources. IPAF's goal is to empower indigenous peoples' communities and their organizations to foster their self-driven development.

The IPAF is governed by a board formed in majority by indigenous leaders, including a member of the UNPFII. The Facility is co-managed at regional level by Indigenous Peoples' Organizations. The projects financed by IPAF are designed and implemented by indigenous peoples' communities and their organizations. In response

to IPAF's four calls for proposals (2007, 2008, 2011 and 2015), 127 projects have been financed through small grants up to USD 50,000 in more than 45 countries worldwide for a total amount of USD 3.6 Million.

Beyond IPAF, IFAD has been using its grant instrument to support **indigenous peoples' organizations at international level**. Grant financial support has been provided to indigenous peoples' organizations in international processes, such as the Assessment of the First Decade of the Indigenous Peoples in Asia (Tebtebba Foundation, Philippines); Specific Indicators on the Well-being of Indigenous Peoples (UNPFII Secretariat); World Gathering of Pastoralists Women (MARAG, India); Communications for development with indigenous peoples, (FAO-CIDOB, Bolivia; EBario, Malaysia); Climate Change (Tebtebba Foundation; MPIDO, Kenya); Dissemination and trainings on UNDRIP with UNDAF (UNPFII Secretariat); Fostering dialogue between indigenous peoples, UN Organizations and governments (IWGIA); Support participation of indigenous peoples in Rio+20 (IWGIA); Support to the preparation and follow up of the World Conference with Indigenous Peoples (IWGIA); Indigenous Peoples Communities of Food (Slow Food and Samii people); Indigenous Food Security and Agrobiodiversity (Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty; Bioversity International); Learning Route Managing Forests, Sustaining Lives, Improving Livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Groups in the Mekong Region (AIPP, PROCASUR); and regional workshops organized in preparation of the first global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD (AIPP, Tebtebba Foundation, MPIDO, CADPI, Fondo Indígena, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA).

III. IFAD Institutional space for consultation and dialogue with Farmers Organizations and Indigenous Peoples

Beyond the two spaces of country level participation in operations and access to direct financial support, IFAD has established since 2005 two specific spaces for consultation and dialogue at corporate level with Farmers and Rural Producers Organizations and with Indigenous Peoples. These are the Farmers Forum and the Indigenous Peoples Forum. Both of these spaces are actually on-going processes that culminate every other year in global meetings in conjunction with the session of IFAD Governing Council, IFAD highest governing body. Both fora have direct access to the Governing Council in the form of a statement read in plenary session.

The Farmers' Forum at IFAD⁴

The Farmers' Forum (FAFO) was launched in 2005 at the request of three international farmers organizations, as a bottom-up process of consultation and dialogue between small farmers and rural producers' organizations, IFAD and governments, focused on rural development and poverty reduction. This unique space is founded upon an agreement reached at the Workshop "Towards a Farmer's Forum at IFAD's Governing Council", Rome, February 2005, endorsed by IFAD and 34 representatives of farmers organizations from all continents, including IFAP, La Via Campesina and ROPPA.

Since its creation, the Farmers Forum process is governed by a Steering Committee (SC) composed of the leaders of the main regional and global networks of Farmers and Rural Producers Organisations and of IFAD. The main functions of this Steering Committee have been: i) defining the agenda of the FAFO global meeting, ii) nominate the participants with quota for each FO networks), the chairpersons of the different sessions and the spoke person presenting the statement to the Governing Council of IFAD, iii) draft and negotiate the FAFO statement ("synthesis of deliberations").

The Steering Committee has been working on the basis of agreed upon practice and mutual trust but does not have a formal status, nor a secretariat (IFAD staff in the SC have been de facto fulfilling this role).

⁴ The Farmers' Forum page on IFAD website: <https://www.ifad.org/topic/farmersforum/overview>

Currently the FOs represented in the Steering Committee are: AFA (Asia, 17 national members); COPROFAM (Mercosur of South America, 13 national members); INOFO (global network of organic farmers organizations); PAFO (Africa, 5 sub-regional networks with 55 national members); ROPPA (West Africa, the organisation that formally initiated the establishment of FAFO. Now member of PAFO); La Via Campesina (global, founding member of the FAFO, 160 national members); WFF (global fishers, 48 national members); WFFP (global fishers, 29 national members) and WFO (global federation of farmers organizations that replaced IFAP after its collapse).

In 2013/14 the FOs member of the Steering Committee decided to constitute themselves in an autonomous Orientation Committee (OC) and requested to dispose of two days meeting in Rome before the FAFO main session to prepare themselves. This was agreed and at the 2014 FAFO meeting the OC drafted the Synthesis of Deliberation independently from IFAD. The OC also requested IFAD and obtained in 2015 the funding of an autonomous assessment of the FAFO that has been conducted and will be presented to the forthcoming global meeting.

Box 1: The Farmers' Forum Consensus, February 2005

The participants share IFAD's fundamental objective of overcoming rural poverty through the economic, social and political empowerment of rural poor people themselves and their organizations.

They agree with and support the overall project of creating a Farmer's Forum for consultations and dialogue on ways to "enable the rural poor to overcome poverty" and on IFAD operations.

The Farmers' Forum is:

- an ongoing, bottom-up, process – not a periodic event – spanning IFAD-supported operations on the ground and policy dialogue;
- a tripartite process involving farmers' organizations, governments and IFAD;
- a space for consultation and dialogue focused on rural poverty reduction;
- an instrument for accountability of development effectiveness, in particular in the area of empowerment of rural poor people and their organizations; and
- an interface between pro-poor rural development interventions and the process of enhancing the capacity of farmers' and rural producers' organizations (including organizations of artisanal fishers, pastoralists, landless workers and indigenous peoples).

The Farmers' Forum is:

- guided by the principles of inclusiveness, pluralism, openness and flexibility;
- built on existing fora where possible, avoiding duplication in these cases; and
- respecting existing organizations and creating new spaces where needed.

Conditions:

- The forum process starts with national-level consultations that feed into regional or sub-regional meetings. The latter shape the content of, and participation at, the farmers' forum at the IFAD Governing Council.
- The forum process should feed into IFAD's governing bodies.
- The forum's success depends on IFAD's capacity to enhance country-level consultation with farmers' organizations and contribute to their capacity-building needs.
- Participants recommend, in particular, institutionalizing engagement with farmers' organizations in key IFAD operational processes (projects, and country and regional strategies).

Over the decade 2006-2016 the Farmers Forum process involved hundreds of smallholder farmers, fishers, pastoralists and rural women organizations. Dozens of regional and country level consultations prepared sixth global meeting in conjunction with the Governing Council of IFAD. Special sessions have been organised with Rural women organizations, Youth organizations, small scale fishers and pastoralist. Conclusions and recommendations of each global meeting have been presented to the IFAD top management and read in plenary session of the Governing Council of the Fund. The implementation of these recommendations have been closely monitored by IFAD that reports to the Farmers Forum through the report *Partnership in progress*.

The Farmers Forum yielded significant changes in the way IFAD and organised smallholder farmers relate to each other. In the words of the FO leaders member of the Orientation Committee: *"Over the past ten years the dialogue between peasant family farmers and small-scale producers organizations, on the one hand, and IFAD, on the other, has deepened. Significant progress has been made in building strong and mutually rewarding relations. The family farmers and small-scale producers organizations have increased their organizational capacity and their ability to manage their input into the dialogue"*.

The Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD⁵

IFAD recognizes indigenous peoples as valuable partners in its works at the international, national and local levels to fulfill its mandate on poverty reduction. Through its experience on the ground, IFAD has learnt that development strategies with indigenous peoples need to be guided by a holistic vision that encompasses economic growth, empowerment, sustainable management of natural resources, and recognition and protection of social, economic, and cultural rights. To implement this vision, it is necessary to ensure full and effective participation of indigenous peoples at all levels. The processes and instruments set forth by IFAD in the past decade have been developed and are being implemented with the direct participation of indigenous peoples' leaders and organizations. The IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (2009) was developed in close cooperation and full consultation with indigenous leaders, including the members of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). In 2011, IFAD, in consultation with indigenous peoples' leaders established the **Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD**, an institutionalized platform for consultation and dialogue with indigenous peoples which aims to improve IFAD's accountability to its target groups and its development effectiveness, and to exercise a leadership role among international development institutions.

At corporate level, IFAD established the Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD in 2011 and held its first and second global meetings respectively in February 2013 and 2015. The Forum's objectives are to: a) monitor and evaluate implementation of the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, including its contribution to realizing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and share and discuss the findings with IFAD staff, Member States and representatives of indigenous peoples; b) build and strengthen partnerships between IFAD and indigenous peoples in order to address poverty and sustainable development in a way that reflects culture and identity, taking into account the perspectives and aspirations of indigenous peoples; c) promote the participation of indigenous peoples' organizations in IFAD activities at the country, regional and international levels, and at all stages of project and programme cycles, and support capacity-building of indigenous peoples' organizations.

The Forum meets every other year in February **in conjunction with IFAD's Governing Council**. It brings together 20 to 30 indigenous peoples' representatives, including board members of the IFAD Indigenous Peoples' Assistance Facility (IPAF), selected members of the UNPFII, representatives of indigenous peoples' communities involved in IFAD-supported programmes, and representatives of national and regional indigenous peoples' organizations. The Forum is governed by a Steering Committee whose membership consists of seven representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations (two each from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, and one from the Pacific); one representative of the IPAF Board; one representative of the UNPFII; and one IFAD representative. Synthesis of deliberations of the Forum are delivered at the IFAD Governing Council, which generally also hosts specific panels on indigenous peoples. Action plans agreed upon by the Forum and IFAD are implemented at regional and country levels.

The global meetings of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD are informed by regional consultations preceding the global meetings of the Forum and organized in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific regions and led by indigenous peoples' organizations at the regional and country levels.

⁵ IPs Forum page on IFAD website: https://www.ifad.org/topic/ip_forum/tags/indigenous_peoples/6520350

IPs Forum third global meeting page: <https://www.ifad.org/ipforum>

Link proceedings IPs Forum third global meeting <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/de5f3145-bef5-4394-9533-bb86d8cb5a04>

Participation of IFAD's target group is solicited also through consultations on key IFAD's documents. This was the case of the preparation of the IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025. Among the groups consulted to provide their input in the Strategic Framework were the Farmers' Organizations and indigenous peoples through the Steering Committee of the Farmers' Forum and Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD.