

S.4 Indigenous Peoples Food Systems Trust

1. What, in brief, is the solution?

This is an innovative and catalytic Indigenous Peoples-run Trust to: support the leadership capacity of indigenous youth, to develop collaborative and inclusive research and learning platforms for Indigenous Peoples, to protect Indigenous Peoples' Food systems, to promote their territorial and land rights, to support their customary institutions and governance, and to improve equity by reducing asymmetries of power. The spirituality and cosmogony of Indigenous Peoples and their intimate relationship with ecosystems, the environment, and the land, will be central values that will inform the operationalization of this innovative fund. During the March 31, 2021 exchange of ideas between members and researchers of the FAO initiated Global Hub on Indigenous Peoples Food Systems and the Scientists of the Scientific Committee of the UN Food Systems Summit, the White/Whipala Paper presented by the Global Hub acknowledged this Trust Fund as a possible game changer. It suggested that it could be considered as an autonomous Sub Fund of the Zero-Hunger Fund identified by Action Track 1 as a game changer. This will empower the key elements of sustainability and resilience inherent in Indigenous Peoples food systems for centuries. It will also inform future food systems, indigenous as well as non-indigenous. The systemic approaches that indigenous people's practice (based upon system elements and the relationships between them), the sacred relationship with nature, consensus-based decision-making, gender equity, collective rights to territory and communal resources and, the protection of biodiversity, will be essential characteristics to be considered when managing this Indigenous Peoples' Trust Fund.

This innovative solution will support platforms that promote the collation, transmission and continuous refinement of indigenous people's knowledge related to their food systems. This is critical to ensure the protection of ecological attributes that can counterbalance climate change, protect biodiversity while guaranteeing the continuity of indigenous peoples' food systems and their governance and territorial management systems that inform them.

2. What was/were the source(s) from which this solution emerged?

This solution has emerged from an Indigenous People's elder and representative in AT4 and from various discussions on the topics in AT4 meetings and other summit dialogues. It is also based on content from a paper by the CIAT-Bioversity Alliance and the Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (TIP), from the White/Whipala paper drafted by the Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples Food Systems, from FAO recommendations to other Action tracks, and from a solution submitted by WFP as well as other literature.

3. What problem is it trying to address within food systems?

Indigenous Peoples' Knowledge Systems and their traditional knowledge, in most cases orally transmitted, have been critical to the preservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the integrity of ecosystems worldwide. Scientists around the world are progressively understanding the overlapping between biodiversity rich areas, pockets of high cultural diversity and number of languages spoken. The interconnection between languages, culture, spirituality, and biodiversity conservation is being progressively understood by non-indigenous peoples. This is leading to the review of some of the current conservation practices and the review of fundamental ecological paradigms to incorporate the role of, in this case, indigenous peoples to maintain biodiversity

and ecosystems health. Despite this, Indigenous Peoples are increasingly under threat from extractive industries, logging, mining, and intensive commercial large scale agricultural schemes. This is creating displacement, violence, illegal resource extraction, land tenure insecurity, biodiversity destruction and loss of indigenous peoples' millennial knowledge.

Moreover, intersectional vulnerability which looks at the effect multiple identities (i.e. Indigenous poor female) can have on a person or a group's livelihood opportunities and well-being- is progressively gaining attention. Capacity building -training, skill development, access to resources, markets, to appropriate social protection schemes, and to opportunities in the formal economy, and being part of co-creating knowledge for the design of sustainable food systems are key areas for Indigenous Peoples to play a significant role in game changing and systemic solutions to food production.

Current food systems approaches do not adequately protect and enhance the capacities of young Indigenous Peoples nor do they recognise the knowledge of elders. We cannot expect indigenous communities to carry the burden of protecting the world's agrobiodiversity and traditional agroecological knowledge, without funding, capacity building support, audiences or truly supportive and long-term strategic alliances and champions. Many young indigenous people are forced to consider migrating from their communities to find sources of livelihoods other than those in their communities, including, sadly, rejection of their local food systems. There is no networking or learning opportunities with basic training, coaching, or mentoring for young indigenous people interested in food systems sustainability, governance, decision-making or institution building. There is also no room for innovating their food systems and knowledge is being lost rapidly.

Access to policy making processes is restricted and local and indigenous knowledge is undervalued and misrepresented in mainstream technical and policy discussions. Further, climate change and variability and damage to ecosystems are also challenging indigenous communities' ability to adapt. Biodiversity loss is having adverse impacts on indigenous communities' abilities to sustain themselves and their needs using their traditional food systems. Some communities can mitigate against these risks using their existing knowledge, but others need support from trusted partners to help them problem-solve and identify climate resilient species and varieties and, where appropriate, leverage modern technologies and agroecological practices to meet local needs. This requires organised, funded, youth-oriented capacity strengthening and knowledge management.

4. Why is addressing that problem important for achieving the goal of your working group?

AT4 seeks solutions that drive access to equitable livelihoods. An equity approach implies that Indigenous Peoples (historically marginalized and often now displaced from their lands) are afforded more resources and opportunities to protect and enhance their livelihoods with emphasis on their indigenous peoples food systems and local resources. Policy makers and multi-lateral organizations need Indigenous Peoples' Leaders to share their experience of what they need, what they have learned, what is working, what plant species are resilient and which ones are not, just as much as Indigenous Peoples need opportunities to learn other innovative approaches from other cultures (e.g. western) and seek ways to build their own capacities to adapt and to increase their resilience. An Indigenous Peoples-ran fund will enable them to reduce the asymmetry of power and negotiations that historically has progressively marginalized indigenous peoples across the world.

5. How can this solution address that problem (theory of change)?

By acknowledging that the practices, knowledge, and resources of indigenous food systems can contribute to advancing equitable livelihoods, this solution can catalyse investment in youth leadership and capacities to ensure the achievement of multiple SDGs. Successful protection, sustainable use and revitalisation of Indigenous food systems for well-being and livelihoods by communities would be beacons of hope for a world desperately looking for regenerative solutions to environmental degradation, habitat destruction and climate change. The success of such approaches would in turn not only highlight the need to go beyond methods and solutions derived from intercultural co-learning and co-creation but also emphasise the role played by Indigenous values that make possible life-affirming relationships with nature and other peoples based on the 4R's: Reverence, Respect, Reciprocity and Redistribution.

Our theory of change is that small scale localized traditional and indigenous systems of food production can not only advance equitable livelihoods, but that they can advance nutritional wellbeing, ecosystem health and resilience to climate change. Sharing knowledge can also contribute to the design and management of the much-needed sustainable food systems worldwide. Our aim is to connect previously disconnected indigenous change makers, youths, holders of traditional and contemporary knowledge through learning and knowledge processes for livelihood development. The solution will strengthen the agency of indigenous youth through training and specialist skills so that they can lead the protection, sustainable use, and revitalization of indigenous food systems for livelihoods and wellbeing. Initiatives under the fund could include:

- Leadership and capacity strengthening of emerging leaders and intergenerational mentorship
- Community ownership and management of natural resources promoted through youth training
- Movement building through networking and communities of practice
- Strengthen existing and explore new partnerships with alliances, confluences, and social movements
- Build indigenous knowledge systems with new curricula, learning processes, mentorship, training
- Establish scholarships and research initiatives with established institutions
- Extract the learnings, and widely advocate both the success and the guiding forces that made it possible
- Integrate gender equality and promote the leadership of young women
- Catalyse and reorient ongoing global funds such as the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund or the Payment for Ecosystems Services of the CBD to scale up their initiatives in the territories of Indigenous Peoples.

6. Why does this solution align to the definition and criteria for a 'game changing solution' developed by the Summit?

This solution can have significant impact at scale as it would result in the protection and enhancement of the lives and livelihoods of millions of people and their natural environments. Collective action by indigenous youth leaders and communities demanding and contributing to change within political processes and institutions will help to secure local control and management of food systems. The solution also meets the expectation within the Summit of approaches that deliberately aim to protect and enhance the agency of people in food systems – particularly the agency of the most marginalised.

7. Existing evidence supporting the argument that this solution will work/achieve initial outcomes

Exclusion from decision-making processes and institutions deprives many young Indigenous Peoples of access to the resources and services, as well as to economic opportunities in local food systems, that would improve their lives. But indigenous grassroots leaders in North-East India are discovering on average 202+ new plant species per village. Farmers there are keen observers merging local traditions with innovations; fighting pests without polluting their crops; exploring solutions to scale, without damaging the fertility of their lands; adapting to climate change by making more informed food decisions instead of simply migrating; resisting cash crop farming where they can to protect their families nutrition and food security when income is low. UN statistics show that indigenous peoples are nearly three times more likely to live in extreme poverty than their non-indigenous counterparts.

Indigenous peoples' opportunities to access good quality employment are scarce – they are 20 percent more likely to work in the informal economy than non-indigenous workers. Indigenous women are 26 percent more likely to work in the informal sector than non-indigenous women. Over 97 percent of indigenous women in Africa work in the informal economy. Almost 47 percent of indigenous adults in employment have no education compared to 17 percent of non-indigenous adults signalling severe educational inequalities. COVID-19 has exacerbated this vulnerability—and even more so in the case of indigenous persons with disabilities. Traditional agriculture still covers cover around 10 million ha, worldwide, providing cultural and ecological services to rural inhabitants and wider markets. By providing means to study those traditional systems and encouraging the process of sharing knowledge between generations and between elders and scientists, we can enhance our knowledge on complex systems and propose novel sustainable food systems suited for different needs and habitats.[1]

8. What is the current and/or likely political support for this idea?

There is growing recognition of the need for action and investment by governments, international agencies, and civil society organizations for more and better support to youth leadership and capacity building in indigenous food systems. Indigenous youths with more skills in acknowledging, respecting, and understanding how traditional knowledge and contemporary science can work together for a more caring society is urgently needed.

9. Are there certain contexts for which this solution is particularly well suited, or, not well-suited?

According to the UN, there are over 370 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide, living in about 70 countries. Their presence in different ecosystems, habitats, cultures, languages, means that there is a high potential for Indigenous Peoples and the global community to collaborate significantly in the design of more sustainable food systems worldwide. In doing so, they will help to build bridges between cultures and systems of knowledge through an intercultural process. Indigenous communities everywhere are therefore central to generating solutions to local challenges. When young people are empowered with knowledge and skills, with access to networks and communities of practice, with increased confidence and agency, they will become the creators and custodians of both sustainable and equitable food systems.

[1] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3868293?seq=1>