

S.5 Strengthening Indigenous Peoples' Agency to Contribute to Food Systems Transformation

1. What, in brief, is the solution?

WFP, in close partnership with UN agencies, government, non-governmental organizations and indigenous peoples' organizations, have developed an integrated approach across three pillars to address the challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, unsustainable livelihoods, and food and nutrition insecurity.

1. *Promoting cultural revitalization and traditional knowledge as a component to food security and climate prediction* empowers indigenous communities to harness and use traditional practices to improve livelihoods. For example, as part of this global approach in Guatemala the JPRWEE programme supports indigenous women to use traditional soil conservation practices and recovers and promotes traditional foods and local varieties. It has led to the development of a recipe book documenting their food practices using native products. In Bolivia WFP worked with indigenous communities to develop an early warning system based on bio-indicators which draw on ancestral knowledge and traditional practices to predict the weather which are integrated into the National Early Warning System.
2. *Expanding linkages of IP's to markets to reduce conflict* incorporates local peace-building initiatives to prevent and mitigate conflict between the indigenous communities and the non-indigenous local groups in Democratic Republic of Congo, through the identification, planning and creation of common infrastructure projects and village peace committees, thereby promoting dialogue, social cohesion and social and economic integration.
3. *Strengthening traditional livelihood resilience to climate change*: By building the adaptive capacities of indigenous peoples to changing climates and greater variability to rainfall, increases traditional livelihoods to thrive. For example, along the border area of Colombia and Ecuador and in Republic of Congo with the indigenous Aka people and smallholder farmers are provided with knowledge and adapted cultivation techniques to reduce vulnerability to climate change.

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

This solution has emerged from a collection of sources among them an assessment of WFP activities involving indigenous peoples and the work emerging from WFP's IP Portfolio in addition to discussions with various partners from AT 3 and 4, which have validated some of the findings.

It is also based on content from various sources of literature emerging from IP networks, research institutions and UN agencies as well the projects in Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Republic of Congo, and Democratic Republic of Congo which have a shared story. They target often neglected and remote communities affected by conflict, disaster, food insecurity, and/or structural discrimination. The projects foster agency by recognizing their traditional knowledge and practices and building their capacity to lead the protection, management, and restoration of their landscapes. These projects place the beneficiaries and their organizations as the drivers- deciding how they will engage through the principle of free prior and informed consent and as implementing partners. They benefit from a web of alliances that bridge the scientific and academic communities with the local- enabling the documentation of know-how in meteorology, nutrition, forestry- benefitting people at scale.

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

According to the International Labour Organization, there are approximately 476.6 million indigenous people in the world, belonging to 5,000 different groups, in 90 countries worldwide. In some countries like Guatemala indigenous peoples make up over 40 percent of the population and 80 percent of indigenous people live in multi-dimensional poverty in marginalized rural areas¹.

Indigenous peoples' complex traditional knowledge (TK) systems have been critical to the preservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the integrity of ecosystems.

Their livelihoods have also traditionally relied on land and resources. However, indigenous peoples are increasingly under threat from resource extraction, land tenure insecurity, environmental conservation efforts and the impact of climate change- and in some circumstances armed conflict. 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 are key areas for moving forward.

4. Why is addressing that problem important for achieving the goal of your Action Track?

Traditional knowledge is recognized as a resource that contributes to communities' food security and can help communities address significant challenges ranging from sustainable agriculture to disaster mitigation and social cohesion. It is thus critical to ensuring equitable access to livelihoods and central to the strategic intent of AT4. This means ensuring indigenous peoples' informed participation in decision-making, enhancing their capacity and skills, and harnessing their traditional knowledge and practices as a valuable resource to ensure their livelihoods and environment can thrive and benefit all. Furthermore, boosting nature-based production and equitable livelihoods requires intercultural approaches that are promoted through partnerships, network building and access to platforms to make indigenous peoples' contributions visible.

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

This solution is premised on a programme with a potential operational footprint in over 80 countries with integrated programming currently ongoing in over 50 countries to:

- improve the living environment of people in vulnerable situations and communities at risk through the creation of various community assets for disaster risk reduction
- protect local environments and ecosystems through climate adaptive agricultural practices and related activities
- improve communities' natural resource base through soil and water conservation measures
- facilitate access to assets, capacity, skills, and information to fulfil an equitable livelihood

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. Indigenous food systems sustainably manage and govern natural resources and allow traditional knowledge to guide decisions to maintain ecosystem integrity.

This entails identifying solutions and models that 1) assist communities in vulnerable situations with the skills and partners to drive the initiatives forward, and 2) enable processes for all stakeholders to work together to encourage innovation. A common strategy used to address these issues is to establish or enlarge protected areas. Often areas coincide with indigenous peoples' territories resulting in their displacement. For example, in Nepal according to NEFIN (National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities), 65% of indigenous peoples' ancestral land has now been occupied by national parks and reserves^[1] forcing many to take refuge elsewhere. There is a need for new solutions to preserve and boost biodiversity while also reducing potential conflict and further displacement.

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 leaders and communities demanding and contributing to change within political and social processes and institutions will help to secure local control and management of food systems.

It could lead to the scaling out of soil conservation practices that would contribute to sustainability across other communities, including early warning systems based on ancestral knowledge to predict weather patterns which contribute to disaster risk reduction, and the cultivation of nutrient-rich food and the cultivation of often neglected foods to provide diversity in diets. These activities and practices are a benefit for all and many have proven key during the current Covid 19 pandemic, which has exposed the vulnerabilities of global food chains.

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

[Evidence](#) demonstrates that IP food systems can be climate resilient, productive, sustainable, and equitable. (See also research emerging from the [Global Hub for Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems](#)) A UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment in Guatemala exhibits how the recovery of traditional social conservation practices can have an impact on food security. The *milpa*, an intercropping method based on traditional knowledge of the environment, climate and availability of natural resources can be key in the availability of food. These kinds of practices can be identified and promoted in other contexts. For example, a recent study carried out in Central African Republic documented that overall, 67.4 percent of the indigenous people's households surveyed were food insecure. This is due to multiple issues including displacement from territories/lands, lack of access to resources and discrimination. Projects that could identify and recognize their practices in livestock rearing for the Peuhl; and in forest derived food products for the Aka could have long lasting benefits for the IPs but also non-indigenous communities alike.

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 only exacerbated their vulnerability—and even more so in the case of indigenous persons with disabilities.

- Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future
- UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2019 theme: Traditional knowledge: Generation, transmission and protection)
- FAO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE How ancestral knowledge will improve food

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

There is a growing recognition of the need for action and investment by governments, international agencies, civil society organizations and indigenous peoples' organizations for greater and better support capacities in indigenous in food systems.

Rome based UN agencies, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Rio conventions, and international and local NGOs, among others from the scientific community are strong advocates for recognizing the role of traditional knowledge in sustainable food systems and the importance of working with indigenous peoples as partners in moving this work forward. .

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

The actions proposed can be implemented globally, in areas and countries where both non and indigenous peoples and local communities live.

[1] <http://www.nefin.org.np/list/Indigenous-People-of-Nepal/5/0/5>