

‘Leaving no one behind’ in Agenda 2030



Indigenous Peoples and
the Sustainable Development Goals

Summary



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Summary

With respect to its principles and obligations, Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is based on the Charter of the United Nations and instruments of International Law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. With a **human rights approach** in development policy, the UN member states take responsibility and commit themselves to the implementation of the global sustainable development goals (SDGs) contained in Agenda 2030 protecting, respecting and guaranteeing human rights and observing human rights principles such as participation, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability.

Within the UN system and the framework of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, **Indigenous Peoples** and their local communities are recognised as important social groups and interest bearers. With their knowledge, their traditional practices, technologies, strategies and innovations they are important actors and **partners for the implementation of sustainable development**. Amongst other things, they valuably contribute to the sustainable use of natural resources, to the **protection of biodiversity, forests and climate** as well as to the adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

In many countries indigenous peoples suffer from marginalisation and discrimination, they often live below poverty level and are victims of disregard and violations of their human as well as specific economic, social and cultural rights that international agreements and legal instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples have granted them. The implementation of Agenda 2030 under observation of the Human Rights Approach offers the chance to improve the living conditions of indigenous peoples, to enforce their rights and promote their contributions to sustainable development. Without the protection, respect and guarantee of human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples, the Agenda not only loses meaning and significance, but depending on the way of its implementation also contains within itself risks and potential conflict.

The study by INFOE introduces the complex subject matter and explains correlations, chances, risks and perspectives of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. Its focus is the significance of the Human Rights Approach in the implementation of Agenda 2030 which shall be demonstrated and explained with respect to individual SDGs.

By means of this study, INFOE would like to provide inputs and call on the responsibility of the UN member states, in particular Germany, to protect, respect and guarantee the human and specific rights of Indigenous Peoples in the implementation, follow-up and review processes of Agenda 2030 as only upon the protection of human rights, the consideration and participation of all important interest bearers and social groups, the common goal of an inclusive, peaceful, social and ecologically just, and thus really sustainable, development may be reached.

Key Messages

In detail, a **rights based implementation** and further development of Agenda 2030, and in particular of some of the specific SDGs considered here, means that Germany declares the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (**UNDRIP**) **as the underlying principle** of its foreign trade policy and its cooperation with indigenous peoples, their communities and institutions and sees to its implementation in accordance with a human rights approach in practice. Hereby, an emphasis has to be placed on indigenous peoples' **rights to land and natural resources** as well as their right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) because these rights and principles are indispensable for all sectors of economic cooperation and the implementation of the sustainable development goals.

In particular with regard to measures for the achievement of SDG 2 („End hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture“) and its sub-goals, the **individual and collective land rights**, the land ownership situation and rights of use of natural resources of indigenous peoples have to be observed to guarantee safe and equal access of indigenous peoples to land and resources.

With respect to the goals of Agenda 2030, Indigenous Peoples are not only one of the affected **vulnerable groups** who require special attention and support, but they are also an important social group in Agenda 2030 and the United Nations' conceptual framework for sustainable development who have to be recognised as such and adequately considered. It is therefore necessary to promote the recognition, appraisal and support of indigenous peoples and their communities, institutions and organisations with regard to their **important contributions** to the implementation and realisation of the SDGs. Moreover, this has to be accompanied by the corresponding guarantee and support of the effective participation of indigenous peoples as an important group in multi-actor-partnerships for the implementation of Agenda 2030.

The perception and **recognition of the cultural diversity** of indigenous peoples together with the consideration and **recognition of their diverse economies, local subsistence strategies, innovations and practices** of sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem management form the essential basis of economic activities and sustainable development. In our opinion, these provide orientation for the development of local as well as global sustainable ways of living and subsistence strategies. Hereby, it is necessary to realise and respect the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and self-determined development as well as their own interests and priorities in development, in particular with regard to their alternative life styles that built upon a different vision of the world and not upon the global UN concepts of „green growth“ and „sustainable development“.

The importance of **alternative conservation and resource use practices** of indigenous peoples in particular becomes clear in connection with SDG 13 concerning climate protection and 15.2 for the protection of forest ecosystems. Thus, the last remaining tropical rainforests are found in areas where indigenous peoples live. Forests under local indigenous management are often well protected because of their traditional and sustainable forest management. The main reason for this is that populations depending on forests do not regard the forest only as a source for their alimentation and their livelihoods, but as the main basis of their identity, culture and living environment.¹ Forest and climate protection measures that do not take into account these experiences and cultural dimensions of forest conservation by indigenous peoples and their communities as well as the closely related consultation, participation, land and resource rights, may not be sustainable and contribute to climate protection.

In this context it is also important to value and recognise the **traditional knowledge** of indigenous peoples on an equal level as other knowledge systems as the basis for innovations and solutions to global crises. Thus, on the one hand indigenous peoples, by way of their traditional agricultural practices and use of natural resources as well as their forms of ecosystem management, contribute considerably to the conservation of seeds, crops and productive livestock; on the other hand they dispose of a profound knowledge of the characteristics, effects and use options of numerous plants and animals. The contributions of indigenous peoples to the increase of resilience of agricultural methods and to the preservation of the diversity of cultivated and agricultural crops, to the protection of ecosystems as well as to the strengthening of the adaptability to the impacts of climate change and to achieve sustainable development are of particular importance with regard to the achievement of SDG sub-goal 2.4.²

A rights-based approach in the implementation of measures for the securing of a sustainable food production, for the promotion of resilient agricultural methods and increase of productivity is necessary to avoid that in the course of such measures, the land use rights of the local population as well as their experiences and knowledge are disregarded. In this respect, the protection, respect and guarantee of the rights of indigenous peoples, in particular concerning the protection of their lands, their territories, areas and resources from the effects, aggressions and violations of human rights in connection with projects of the extractive industries, mega-investments, land speculation and development are essential and should among other things be geared by the **UN-Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights**.

In the course of follow-up and review processes of the Agenda 2030, indigenous peoples have to be included in the global **SDG indicators** and their elaboration as holders of specific economic, social

1 Tebtebba (2010), *Indigenous Peoples, Forests & REDD Plus: Sustaining & Enhancing Forests through traditional Resource Management*, Baguio City: Tebtebba Foundation. p. VII.

2 IPMG (2015b), *Policy Brief on Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Working Draft* p. 4.

and cultural rights and human rights. The general subsumption under vulnerable groups does not adequately take account of their role and importance as important social group in the framework of sustainable development and does not sufficiently observe their specific rights.

To draw attention to and avoid the disregard and violation of the human rights of indigenous peoples in the implementation of the SDGs, statistical data in the quantitative investigation and analysis of the SDGs have to be structured and broken down according to relevant human rights criteria and aspects matching the specific living conditions and needs of indigenous peoples and local communities. If the monitoring does not break down the data accordingly and only statistical averages are applied, possible human rights violations and de-facto-discrimination may be concealed and remain unknown. To control the implementation of the SDGs and their sub-goals under observance of human rights and the specific economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous peoples, it is necessary to make use of **disaggregated data** taking into account **specific indigenous indicators** in the course of the follow-up and review processes of Agenda 2030 and global SDG indicators. In practice, apart from political will, corresponding data, participatory data collection methods and capacity building of state and indigenous institutions are required.

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