

CHALLENGES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG13

- » The practices and strategies of indigenous peoples to increase the resilience of agricultural practices, to conserve the diversity of agricultural and food crops as well as ecosystems, in the sense of SDG 2.4, have to be recognized as „sustainable food systems“ and „resilient“ cultivation methods. They are important contributions particularly to the achievement of SDG 13.1 and 2.4. and to climate protection.
- » Further information and awareness raising as to the contributions of indigenous peoples is necessary as often false understandings of their agricultural methods prevail, such as those of the pastoralists in Mongolia and Eastern Africa, the mountain peoples of Thailand or the indigenous forest dwellers of the Congo Basin. It is not uncommon that their practices are regarded as harmful to the climate, their rights are neglected and adaptation strategies implemented in their territories without taking their opinions into account. However, it is forms of ‚community supported agriculture‘, which build upon cultural and biological diversity that have the potential to increase the adaptive capacity of humans and nature and to reduce the vulnerability of communities and ecosystems.
- » Indigenous peoples and local communities may contribute to solutions for problems caused by climate change, if their rights, in particular their collective rights, are recognized and guaranteed. Therefore, a human rights based approach is necessary to address the causes of vulnerability and to develop adaptation strategies together with those affected in a participatory manner and in accordance with local and socio-cultural conditions. Human rights standards must also form the basis of funding instruments for climate protection, such as the Green Climate Fund, and must be complied with in the process of implementation.⁹

SDG 13.3

„Improve education, awareness-raising [...] on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning“

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Für den Inhalt dieser Publikation ist allein das Institut für Ökologie und Aktions-Ethnologie verantwortlich; die hier dargestellten Positionen geben nicht den Standpunkt von Engagement Global gGmbH und dem Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit sowie den weiteren Förderinstitutionen wieder.

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Joint steps towards Sustainable Development: Indigenous communities as partners in forest, climate and land protection



SDG 13

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



Indigenous Peoples and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2015, the international community adopted „The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development“, comprising 17 global *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) which unite the three dimensions of sustainable development – the economic, social and environmental. All countries are called upon to implement these goals. Human beings are at the core of sustainable development processes and their implementation.¹

Indigenous peoples - with about 370 million people worldwide who identify themselves as such – are important partners in the realization of sustainable development because of their knowledge, traditional practices, technologies, strategies and innovations. They make valuable contributions to the sustainable use of natural resources, to the protection of biodiversity, forests and climate and therefore to the fulfillment of the SDGs.

In order to be able to make these contributions, indigenous peoples' rights have to be guaranteed, in particular as they pertain to land, resources and self-determined development. As a precondition for the self-determined improvement of the living conditions of indigenous peoples and other disadvantaged population groups, the implementation of Agenda 2030 must follow a human rights based approach – also in and by Germany.

With the present series of fact sheets INFOE would like to

- make indigenous peoples' contributions to sustainable development more visible and understandable
- promote the recognition of indigenous rights in the implementation of the SDGs
- promote a human rights based approach to the implementation of the SDGs by Germany

SDG 13 Combat climate change...

Climate change is a global problem with different local impacts. However, while it effects human beings worldwide, it is not primarily felt in those countries and societies that are the biggest polluters but rather in the populations of the poorer countries in the Global South. Their livelihoods and natural resources are impaired or destroyed, their food security is endangered, diseases spread further and migration to the cities as well as to less affected countries increases. Due to their poverty, these people also do not as a rule possess the resources or abilities to confront climate change. Indigenous people(s) are among those most affected.



Indigenous peoples often live in particularly sensitive eco-systems, which are already strongly affected by climate change, such as

- the Inuit and more than 40 other indigenous peoples in the Arctic;
- the indigenous population of the Pacific Island States like Samoa or Vanuatu;
- the Chanty, Nenets and other indigenous peoples of the Siberian Tundra;
- the Quechua and Aymara in the Andean region of South America;
- the nomadic peoples of the savannas and deserts of Africa, such as the Massai, Samburu or the Tuareg as well as
- indigenous peoples of the tropical rainforests and others

As inhabitants of these sensitive ecosystems, indigenous peoples belong to those population groups most affected by climate change although their mainly resource-conserving lifestyles hardly contribute to climate change. Climate change, however, does not only impair or destroy the economic bases of indigenous peoples, but also their cultural identity, their traditional knowledge and resource use practices intrinsically linked to their natural environment.

... strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity

SDG 13.1

„Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries“

There are two main strategies for humans to react to climate change: adapt to the impact of climate change or mitigate its causes. In general, adaptation to the climate means the response of a natural or human system to actual or expected climate change stimuli and their impacts.² Hereby, one could say that there exist two forms of adaptation: on the one hand, planned or preventive adaptation to anticipate imminent impacts, on the other hand, spontaneous adaptation to impacts that have already occurred. A high biological and cultural diversity, in this context, also means a higher variety of options for action and responses.

The more adaptive a socio-ecological system is, the lower is its vulnerability and the greater its resistance to external fluctuations and changes in the natural environment.

SDG 2.4

„By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality“

ronment, including climate change. Indigenous peoples have been living in interaction with their environment for generations and have experience in coping with insecurities, variability and changes in their environment. Thus, they may not simply be called ‘vulnerable groups’ because they already possess experiences, practical responses and knowledge to react to climate change and its impacts. Resilience of indigenous peoples to climate change has its roots in their knowledge, their diverse forms of livelihoods, their cultural values and attitudes as well as their traditional forms of governance. Their social networks support their collective adaptability.³ Their detailed observances of climatic changes, their dynamic and diversified cultivation methods, their resistance against mega-projects, dams and logging, the conservation of complex water supply systems, erosion control and other indigenous adaptation strategies and protective measures are groundbreaking for the worldwide climate protection and solutions to problems caused by climate change. Therefore, indigenous peoples make an important contribution to global SDG 13.

The adaptation strategies and mitigation measures of indigenous peoples are anchored in their local knowledge and traditional practices and are developed from these. While in international negotiations on climate protection, primarily technical-scientific solutions are discussed, the necessary solutions from the perspective of representatives of indigenous communities go far beyond.⁴ They focus on the respect for nature and their relation to nature which is grounded in this respect and



Pastoralists in Mongolia practice a land management sensitive to climate change which includes a mobile and flexible resource management, seasonal migration and migration over long distances, the herding of different types of cattle as well as taboos and rituals that preserve several resources.⁵

their cultural values. The collective and local knowledge provides valuable insights and supplements general scientific research with local experiences. The strategies developed and proven by indigenous peoples to adapt and deal with the effects of climate change are a form of so-called community-based climate adaptation measures.

In community-based adaptation, the focus lies on the empowerment of local communities to reduce their vulnerability. In a process led by the community on the basis of their requirements, priorities, capabilities and their knowledge, strategies are designed and planned to be able to cope with the effects of climate change.⁶ A human-rights-based approach is chosen that places the affected people at the centre of all levels of decision-making, planning and implementation.

Policy Paper by the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Climate Change

4. „[...]The provisions of the UNDRIP articulate rights which must be respected and safeguarded in all climate decision-making and actions. We are therefore holders of collective rights, including sovereign and inherent rights to land and treaty rights, covenants and agreements. Protecting these rights also strengthen the capacity and resilience of indigenous peoples and local communities to respond to climate change.[...]“

The resilience of indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups may be promoted as well as impaired by national policies and legislation. Therefore, it is important to create a political and legal environment that promotes and secures their rights to a self-determined development, to land and access to resources. The strengthening of the rights of indigenous peoples is particularly important for them to be able to exercise their self-determination and active participation in matters and measures which affect them. Only in this way are they in a position to develop strategies of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change which are based on their cultures and locally appropriate. The fundamental rights of indigenous peoples are set forth in ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (in short: ILO Convention 169) and in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).



Karen woman in shifting cultivation field: The indigenous communities of the Karen in Northern Thailand carry out a shifting cultivation that due to collective cultivation and long fallow periods leads to high carbon storage and a very small ecological footprint.⁸



¹ UN GA: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development A/RES/70/1

² GIZ/WRI (World Resource Institute) 2011: Making Adaptation Count. Concepts and Options for Monitoring and Evaluation of Climate Change Adaptation. Eschborn: GIZ. Zugang 22.12.2016 http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/pdf/making_adaptation_count.pdf. S.65

³ Nakashima, D.J., Galloway McLean, K., Thulstrup, H.D., Ramos Castillo, A. and Rubis, J.T. 2012 : Weathering Uncertainty: Traditional Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation. Paris, UNESCO, and Darwin, UNU, 120 pp

⁴ PRATEC- Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas (Editor); author: Grimaldo Rengifo Vásquez: "Crisis Climática y saberes Comunereros en los Andes del Sur Peruano"; sponsored by Broederlijk Delen; 1st Edition, May, 2010.

⁵ International Land Coalition (ILC) (2016); Nomadic Custodians. A Case For Securing Pastoralist Land Rights. p. 2 and 5

⁶ Reid, H., M. Alam, R. Berger, T. Cannon, S. Huq and A. Milligan 2009. Community-based adaptation to climate change: an overview in Community-based adaptation to climate change. Participatory Learning and Action 60: 11-33. IIED, London.

⁷ IIPFCC Policy Paper Bangkok, Thailand September 26-27, 2009. see http://www.indigenousclimate.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59%3Acc-and-ips-documents&Itemid=60&lang=en

⁸ AIPP, IWGIA and NDF (2011) Climate Change, Trees and Livelihood: A Case Study on the Carbon Footprint of a Karen Community in Northern Thailand. www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0510_Karen_Community_Carbon_Footprint.pdf

⁹ The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a fund financing projects of climate change adaptation and mitigation which has been created in the framework of the negotiations of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and which up to date does not count with specific human rights standards.