

## CHALLENGES FOR A CULTURE SENSITIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGS, IN PARTICULAR SDG 4

- » The cultural dimension of sustainability must not be left out of the dialogue and development processes for sustainable development. Cultural diversity, supported especially by indigenous peoples, is significant on the way towards a holistic concept of the future. There already exist examples of 'Best-Practice' which indicate how it contributes to the preservation of biodiversity, climate protection and sustainable development. The dimension of time, which is inherent in the concept of sustainability, also plays a prominent role for indigenous peoples, for example in the care for future generations, for ancestors and the unborn which is still being generically practiced across generations until today.<sup>11</sup>
- » The inclusion of other knowledge and learning systems is necessary in order to look for ways and forms of sustainable development on the local, national and international level, in multidimensional and interdisciplinary ways. In this search, all stakeholders should be taken on board equally with their needs, experiences and priorities.

Joint steps towards sustainable development: Indigenous communities as partners in forest, climate and land protection



## The cultural dimension of sustainable development



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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.

Gefördert von ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL im Auftrag des



Gefördert durch die  
STIFTUNG UMWELT UND ENTWICKLUNG  
NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN

„Gefördert aus Mitteln des Kirchlichen  
Entwicklungsdienstes durch Brot für die Welt –  
Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst“.



### 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

### Sustainable Development, ...

With Agenda 2030, which is meant to give impetus to a worldwide transformation process, the international community aims to leave no one behind on the way towards a global sustainable development. The vision of Agenda 2030 comprises the end of poverty, the protection of planet earth and the guarantee of prosperity for all. In this vision, the global sustainable development goals are oriented towards the three dimensions of sustainability which are to be addressed and implemented in an equal manner. However, an agenda for the sustainable development of mankind must also consider the cultural dimension of sustainability and the value of cultural diversity for sustainable development with their diverse connections to the sustainable development goals. The human rights basis supporting this vision is anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, in particular, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.



## Achieving human rights...

By taking on a human rights approach, the UN member states commit themselves to protecting, respecting and ensuring human rights in the implementation of the agenda and its global sustainable development goals. A human rights based definition of sustainable development means a development that guarantees all human rights of the present generation within a

given ecological space without impairing the human rights of future generations or endangering the possibilities for their safeguarding.<sup>3</sup>

Agenda 2030's vision and approach offer indigenous peoples, who in many

countries suffer from marginalization and discrimination and are often regarded as vulnerable partners in the new global partnership, the chance that their role and rights are better taken into account in the future. As holders of local knowledge, in most cases for generations, they are also bearers of cultural diversity and may significantly enrich debates and processes for sustainable development.

### Vision

8., „We envisage a world of universal **respect for human rights** and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and **non-discrimination**;[...]"<sup>2</sup>

### BMZ main topic

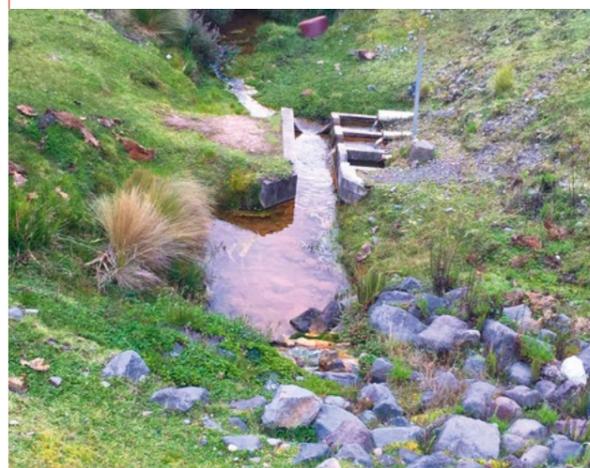
„Sustainable development may only be achieved, if indigenous peoples are able to participate actively, i.e. included in all decisions which concern them (right to self-determination) In particular, this concerns the sectors land, natural resources and environment (territory), legal equality, including the right to culturally adequate education and health care, political participation and self government.“<sup>4</sup>

The negotiation process of the SDGs was characterized by the participation of broad sections of society. Indigenous peoples were actively involved in this process as one of the nine official UN major interest groups. It is now essential to maintain this participatory approach and to include indigenous communities as central actors and local knowledge holders on issues concerning sustainable ways of life and economic practices on equal terms and as equal partners in the implementation in order to achieve the jointly defined objectives.

### Irrigation system in Tungurahua, Ecuador

In an irrigation project in Ecuador, the concerned communities wish for a common development in which local governments and actors of civil society accompany them in their search for solutions.

Source: Project presentation during the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture – GFFA 2017 by the CEO Fundación Dignidad y Vida



### ...and prosperity for all,...

For Germany, the main guiding instrument for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in and by Germany is the National Sustainability Strategy adopted in January 2017. It explains the meaning of sustainable development for the politics of the federal government and emphasizes sustainability as political guiding principle. It substantiates the 17 global sustainable development goals for Germany and sets the standards for clustered, interdepartmental and measurable political actions for their achievement.<sup>5</sup> The orientation towards the guiding principle of sustainability is understood as a driver for more prosperity which is tied to economic growth while new, more sustainable ways for added value are to be developed. However, in many respects, and in many places, the carrying capacities of the Earth are already exceeded when we think of climate change or the loss of biological

diversity. This is all the more true when we use a human rights-based definition of sustainable development, i.e. a development which, along with global justice, prosperity and a “good life”, can be achieved and sustained within the ecological carrying capacities of the Earth.<sup>6</sup>

### ...respecting cultural diversity and ...

According to Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to „a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family [...]“. Depending on the cultural background, individual well-being – also understood as covering one's basic needs – can be interpreted as individual and/or collective well-being and be of both, material and immaterial type. Here, the indigenous concept from the Andean region in South America, the ‚sumak kawsay‘ (Quechua for „the Good Life“) or „Buen Vivir“ (in Spanish) contributes both an alternative concept of „well being“ as well as a counterpoint to the classical definition of „development“ and thus to the debate on „growth“. „Buen Vivir encompasses complex aspects of a materially coherent life in community, fulfilling the basic rights to food, worthy work, education, housing, political and cultural participation. Hereby the human being is always regarded as part of a societal co-existence, even if he or she is described as an individual.“<sup>7</sup> Central to the concept of ‚Buen Vivir‘ is the respect for life and living in harmony with the natural diversity.

For sustainable development processes, this means respecting and integrating indigenous peoples' own development interests and priorities in a partnership-based approach. The traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and their forms of life are to be regarded as equivalent and worth appraising accordingly.

### Article 23 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

„Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development [...]“

### ... ensuring and promoting equitable and high quality education

Frequently however, the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples are discriminated as unscientific, primitive and inhibiting development. On the other hand, indigenous people do not have equal access to high-quality education in many countries, and are therefore one of the population groups most excluded from education. Within the framework of formal education, there is little respect and space for teaching in indigenous languages or even imparting indigenous peoples' knowledge involving their traditional knowledge-holders.<sup>8</sup>

This happens despite the fact that between 4,000 and 5,000 of the 6,800 languages still alive on the planet are spoken by representatives of indigenous peoples. Language diversity is the primary indicator of cultural diversity, which in turn is closely linked to biological diversity. This makes indigenous peoples the representatives of cultural diversity, who must be supported not only with regard to education for sustainable development.

„Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, different systems of belief and indigenous knowledge will figure strongly in the design of local solutions for sustainability, with particular regard to the role played by local languages as a storehouse of knowledge on biodiversity and sustainable development.“<sup>9</sup> Therefore, SDG target 4.7. is particularly important to indigenous peoples, because they view culture as a fundamental and transformative dimension of sustainable development which must be considered alongside the political, social, economic and ecological dimensions and aspects of sustainable development.<sup>10</sup>

### SDG 4.7

„By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through **education for sustainable development** and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and **appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development**.“



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

<sup>2</sup> Agenda 2030, Erklärung Punkt 8 S.4 A/RES/69/315

<sup>3</sup> Aled Dilwyn Fisher (principle author) (2014): A Human Rights Based Approach to the Environment and Climate Change.

A GI-ESCR Practitioner's Guide. The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

<sup>4</sup> Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit (BMZ)

www.bmz.de/de/themen/allgemeine\_menschenrechte/hintergrund/blickpunkt\_indigene.html

<sup>5</sup> Die Bundesregierung: Deutsche Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie 2016

<sup>6</sup> Siehe INFOE Fact Sheets zu SDG 13 und SDG 15.

<sup>7</sup> Acosta/Cray: Sumak kawsay – Das Gute Leben. Ein globaler Weckruf zum Handeln. In: VNB u.a. (Hg.): Global.Patrioten. München, oekom-Verlag, 2012) www.ven-nds.de/projekte/utopista/das-gute-leben/997-el-buen-vivir-das-gute-leben-in-ecuador-und-bolivien

<sup>8</sup> ILO: Indigenous and tribal peoples' rights in practice: a guide to ILO Convention No.169/International Labour Office. Geneva, 2009

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget 2002-2003 (31C/5.) para.01212

<sup>10</sup> INFOE e.V. 2016: Niemanden zurücklassen in der Agenda 2030 – indigene Völker und die Ziele für nachhaltige Entwicklung. S.25

<sup>11</sup> Siehe Seven generation stewardship: www.indigenouspeople.net/iroqcon.htm