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**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**  
Division for Social Policy and Development  
Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

**CONCEPT NOTE FOR MEETING ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND  
INDICATORS OF WELL-BEING**

**Aboriginal Policy Research Conference, Ottawa,**

**22-23 March 2006**

## A. Background

1. Within the global system, there are numerous indicators currently being utilized for measuring progress in governance, policy and programming terms. A large proportion of these indicators are dependent on the nature and quality of data that exists or is under development for measuring progress across various sectors - economic, social, education, health, environment, culture, and human rights.

2. The UN system and a significant number of its Member States are currently gearing their programming at the national level for the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 18 targets and 48 indicators. The formulation of the Goals and the targets and indicators, however, did not include the participation of or consultation with indigenous peoples, thus resulting in a situation where the goals, targets and indicators have not captured or have inadequately captured the specificity of indigenous peoples. They have also not captured many criteria that are essential for the well-being of indigenous peoples, including the protection of their lands, territories, and resources, traditional knowledge, as well as their own aspirations and perceptions of development.

3. In order to address these issues, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has identified a number of strategies and policy outcomes. At its Fourth Session in 2005, the Permanent Forum stated that "...Poverty indicators based on indigenous peoples' own perception of their situation and experiences should be developed jointly with indigenous peoples".<sup>1</sup> The Permanent Forum further elaborated the necessity of disaggregating data and stated, "Governments, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations should within the context of the 2005 Millennium Development Goals review and beyond, develop disaggregated data and information on indigenous peoples, in partnership with indigenous peoples."<sup>2</sup>

4. The Forum also recommends that FAO and the Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development Initiative work further on the development of cultural indicators for identifying priorities and criteria and methodologies for the right to food and food security

5. Data collection and disaggregation has been identified as a major methodological issue in the course of various sessions of the Permanent Forum. It was explored in some detail at a workshop of the Permanent Forum on Data Collection and Disaggregation for Indigenous Peoples in January 2004, which identified the unique challenges with data gathering on indigenous peoples, and made recommendations for improving the methodology for data-collection ([www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/news/news\\_workshop\\_doc.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/news/news_workshop_doc.htm)).

6. Among the key observations of the workshop was that data collection and disaggregation should help "detect discrimination, inequality and exclusion of indigenous peoples, both individually and as a group" and it should be 'culturally specific' and relevant to the problems identified by indigenous peoples.<sup>3</sup> The workshop also noted the necessity of

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 15, Report of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on its Fourth Session, E/C.19/2005/9

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 20, Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Workshop on Data Collection and Disaggregation for Indigenous Peoples to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Third Session, E/C.19/2004/2.

qualitative and human rights indicators to assess the true social situation of indigenous peoples. Some of the key challenges identified in the workshop included: the inadequacy of standard forms to reflect the situation of indigenous peoples; inaccurate reporting of indigenous identities due to wrong questions; the geographic and physical remoteness of many indigenous communities; and the type and number of criteria to determine the ethnic affiliation of respondents.

7. Some of the key recommendations of the workshop included: the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples in data collection; the involvement of indigenous peoples themselves in data collection, analysis and reporting; and the desirability of long-term standardized data based on multiple identification criteria developed with meaningful participation of local indigenous peoples. The workshop also noted that data collection exercises should be conducted in local languages and employ local indigenous interviewers.

8. The workshop further recommended that the UN system use and further refine existing indicators such as the common country assessment indicators, the MDG indicators, country progress reports, other global monitoring instruments and the human development indices to measure the situation of indigenous peoples.

9. The workshop strongly emphasized the need for rights-based indicators that take into account issues of access to territories (land and waters) and to resources, participation in decision-making, as well as issues of discrimination or exclusion in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights. According to the workshop, these indicators should be able to measure the dimensions of the process of realization of human rights such as participation, non-discrimination, empowerment and accountability according to both quantitative and qualitative criteria.

10. Many of the recommendations of the workshop have already been adopted by the Permanent Forum in its Third and Fourth session and addressed specific parts of the UN system. At its Third Session, the Permanent Forum recommended to the UN Development Group ‘that the indicators of the Millennium Development Goals be assessed and that additional indicators be identified to give fuller assessment of environmental sustainability’. Furthermore, the Forum recommended that the Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity organize, in coordination with relevant agencies, a workshop on indicators to measure progress in the objectives of the multi-year program of work and other programs of work, with the full participation of indigenous peoples and their organizations, in order to incorporate the necessary human and social indicators’. Most importantly, the Permanent Forum has decided to give ongoing priority to the cross-cutting issue of data collection and disaggregation as a follow up to recommendations of the technical workshop on data collection.<sup>4</sup>

11. The ILO has also identified the absence of indicators that reflect the situation and aspirations of indigenous peoples. A recent ILO “Ethnic Audit of select Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)” identifies, among the key challenges in overcoming ethnic poverty and social exclusion, the absence of poverty indicators that reflect indigenous and tribal

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<sup>4</sup> Paragraphs 69, 77(e), and 111. Report of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on its Third Session, E/C.19/2004/23.

peoples' own perceptions of poverty and wealth.<sup>5</sup> Such perceptions are based on a broader set of values and concepts such as ownership of land and control over natural resources. Indigenous perceptions of poverty may also be expressed in the form loss of sacred sites, traditional knowledge, indigenous governance systems and autonomy. The ILO audit mentions that conventional indicators are built on 'notions of adequacy or inadequacy that are upheld by mainstream groups'. The audit also discusses that mainstream poverty indicators may disregard indigenous-specific circumstances and may even consider certain indigenous practices or assets as evidence of material deprivation, even though this may not be the case. Neither the eight MDGs nor the 48 MDG-related indicators make reference to indigenous peoples.

12. Among the bilaterals, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) has taken stock of its sector program support (SPS) and the poverty reduction strategies (PRS) to show that in many poverty reduction strategies, activity and output indicators are either very weak or entirely absent, thus presenting a challenge of integrating indigenous peoples' monitoring at the activity and output level. DANIDA's toolkit for Best Practices for Including Indigenous Peoples in Sector Program Support has suggested a number of aspects for monitoring programs on indigenous peoples: 1) monitoring must take into account the often different concepts of indigenous peoples on poverty and development, and indicators must be developed according to indigenous peoples notions of what constitutes poverty, and what constitutes desirable development; this calls for diversification of indicators; 2) since development and poverty reduction among the indigenous people are often different than in mainstream society, it is important that indigenous peoples are significantly involved in PRS formulation, indicator development and monitoring.<sup>6</sup>

13. The DANIDA toolkit recognizes that there is a need to diversify the concept of development in order to ensure its relevance to indigenous peoples' concepts and aspirations. Such a diversified concept also has implications in terms of the types of indicators to be utilized in measuring development. DANIDA lays out two methodological concerns that should be adequately balanced in the definition of indicators: 1) indicators should be relevant to indigenous peoples' notions of development and poverty; and 2) they should allow comparability with other population groups.

14. The UN system, through the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, is currently undertaking a review and compilation of existing indicators that may directly or indirectly concern or relate to indigenous peoples. The results of the review will be presented at the fifth session of the Permanent Forum, in May 2006. It is, however, imperative for indigenous experts to identify the gaps in existing indicator frameworks, examine linkages between quantitative and qualitative criteria, and propose the development of indicators that are culturally-specific, measure exclusion, and reflect the aspirations of indigenous peoples.

15. In order to assist in this effort, the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum is organizing a series of meetings on indicators within this context and seeks to build on the challenges, gaps, and existing work on global and regional indicators across the mandated areas of the Permanent Forum on health, human rights, economic and social development, environment,

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<sup>5</sup> Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: An Ethnic Audit of Selected Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, ILO 2005

<sup>6</sup> Tool Kit: Best practices for including indigenous peoples in sector programme support, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DANIDA 2004

education, and culture. The results of this process will also be presented to the fifth session of the Permanent Forum.

## **B. Objectives and outcome of the meeting**

The meeting is being organized with the objectives to:

- 1) Identify gaps in existing indicators at the global, regional and national levels that assess the situation of indigenous peoples and impact policy making, governance, and program development, including from a gender perspective.
- 2) Examine work being done to improve indicators so that they take into account indigenous peoples and their concerns and assess them according to qualitative and quantitative criteria, including a gender perspective.
- 3) Examine linkages between quantitative and qualitative indicators, particularly indicators that look at processes affecting indigenous peoples
- 4) Propose the formulation of core global and regional indicators that address the specific concerns and situations of indigenous peoples, including indigenous women and can also be used by international financial institutions, the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations, including regional ones.

## **C. Proposed Activities for the expert group**

1. List broad issues that are generally important for indigenous peoples. It would be beneficial to list 10 to 15 core issues.
2. List and discuss which indicators have already been developed for these issues. Are existing indicators relevant?
3. List a few key indicators that would be relevant for the 10 to 15 core issues identified.
4. Identify appropriate data sources for the indicators. These could include: National Statistics Offices and census data, researchers and universities, NGO's, and indigenous peoples collecting their own information and data using participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques for example.

### **Proposed issues and questions for discussion under the above activities**

<b>Issues</b>
<p><i>Proposals and recommendations formulating a core set quantitative and qualitative global and regional indicators around the following themes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ownership of lands, territories, and resources</li> <li>- Maintenance of cultural practices, sacred sites and biological diversity</li> <li>- Traditional knowledge and indigenous governance/management systems</li> </ul>

- Inclusion in political participation and decision-making
- Bilingual and mother tongue education

### Questions for discussion

*Gaps in Indicators, national and global, that impact indigenous peoples:*

**What and where are the gaps in current global, regional and national indicator frameworks? Specifically what subjects that are important to indigenous peoples are not assessed within existing indicators?**

- Millennium Development Goal Indicator Framework
- Commission on Sustainable Development Theme Indicator Framework
- Human Development Index
- Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (Indicators on Governance, Democracy, Justice Administration and Security of Person)
- UN compilation of Youth Indicators
- Examples of indicator-related efforts that try to capture situation of indigenous peoples
  - Cultural Indicators - Indian International Treaty Council
  - Maori Statistics, New Zealand

*Methodology for Indicator Development – addressing quantitative and qualitative issues*

### **What is being measured?**

- quality of data sources/ is data disaggregated according to ethnicity/ indigenous peoples?
- where such data is or is not available, how are indicators developed *viz.* indigenous peoples?
- relevance of existing criteria for indigenous indicator development: valid and meaningful, sensitive and specific to underlying phenomena, grounded in research, allowing international comparison, ability to be disaggregated, linkage with policy and emerging issues

Measuring through quantitative indicator development

- Does measuring capture the situation of indigenous peoples whose notions, concepts, and determinants of well-being are often based on issues of processes rather than outputs and outcomes?
- Examples of where and how measurement works for indigenous peoples
- How can social and economic exclusion be measured - availability of land, exclusion

from its ownership, indicators on violation/denial of the right to land

- How can the intangibles be measured – sacred sites, culture, traditional knowledge?

Assessing processes through qualitative indicators:

- Structural indicators (ratification of international human rights instruments, existence of mechanisms of access to the justice system);
- Process indicators (existence of and access to information relating to policy instruments and programs for the protection and progressive realization of indigenous peoples' economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights)

Sectoral Indicators and their relevance to indigenous peoples

- Social, environmental, health, education, sustainable development and cultural indicators

Linked indicators

- Interactions between the environment, society, economy and economic and social development
- What should be the criteria for linked indicators for indigenous peoples: (policy relevance, measurable, analytically, valid, environmentally informative, simple and easy to understand?)

**Who is the audience for such proposed indicators - international financial institutions, the UN system, other intergovernmental and regional bodies, indigenous peoples' organizations?**

**Background Reading:**

Busso, Matias et.al. Ethnicity and MDGs in Latin America, CEDLAS/Universidad Nacional de La Plata 2004

Common Country Assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework: Guidelines for UN Country Teams. United Nations 2004

Filmer-Wilson, Emilie. An Introduction into the Use of Human Rights Indicators, for Development Programs, June 2005

Indicators for Assessing Progress towards the 2010 target: Status and Trends of Linguistic Diversity and Numbers of Speakers of Indigenous Languages, UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/INF 21, 2004

Indicator Guidelines, Statistics New Zealand

Indicators for Sustainable Development, Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/isdms2001/table\\_4.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/isdms2001/table_4.htm)

Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Millennium Project Report to the UN Secretary-General, [www.unmillenniumproject.org](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org)

Tomei, Manuela, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: An Ethnic Audit of Select Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, International Labor Office, 2005,

Toolkit: Best practices for including indigenous peoples in sector program support, Danish International Development Agency 2004

Webb, Jeremy. Linked Indicators: What these mean for New Zealand Policy Makers, Statistics New Zealand

Youth Development Indicators: Expert Group Meeting. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/youthindicators.htm>