

Statement of UNFPA for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples – 8th August 2014

Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations Population Fund would like to congratulate you for the organization of this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

In many parts of the world indigenous peoples are still invisible, either because national statistics systems do not disaggregate information, or simply because their indigenous identity is not recognized. Where data is available, indigenous peoples usually lag behind in most economic and social indicators whether income, poverty, nutrition, education, sexual and reproductive health and other health challenges. High maternal mortality rates are fairly consistent among indigenous women. They are also highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS with economic, social and sex exploitation as contributing factors.

UNFPA has collaborated with governments and indigenous peoples to visualize and integrate indigenous peoples' issues in national censuses, surveys and specific administrative data systems and has contributed to the formulation of national or sectorial policies and laws, including constitutional reforms that recognize indigenous peoples' identity and rights.

Consistent with its mandate, UNFPA also aims to reduce maternal mortality among indigenous women through promotion of access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including voluntary family planning, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and the reduction of the rate of adolescent pregnancies. To this end, UNFPA spearheaded efforts at global, regional and country levels as well as in more than 26 countries by mainstreaming the rights of indigenous peoples into sexual and reproductive health programmes.

In recent years, culturally sensitive reproductive health policies, programmes and regulations have been integrated and enforced in healthcare systems, especially, but not exclusively, in the Latin American region. Health services are being adapted and expanded with the inclusion of symbolic and meaningful cultural elements and practices

The active engagement with indigenous peoples in the design of policies and programmes as well as in implementing community-based interventions has contributed to increase access by indigenous women, girls and youth to critical packages of sexual and reproductive health, HIV prevention and gender-based violence services, in particular those from rural and underserved areas.

UNFPA will continue to work on addressing inequalities and poverty among indigenous peoples around the globe, as well as promoting their sexual and reproductive health, rights and well-being, free from discrimination and violence. Through strengthened partnerships with indigenous peoples' organizations and networks, this work will remain focused on ensuring access to culturally appropriate services, promoting south-south cooperation to scale up and promote intercultural health models, and empowering indigenous women their own communities and as part of a global, inclusive and diverse society.