

Consolidated Response from the United Nations Population Fund- UNFPA UN Questionnaire

Introduction

The United Nations Population Fund- UNFPA, works in more than 150 countries and territories that are home to the vast majority of the world's indigenous populations. UNFPA aims to strengthen comprehensive sexual and reproductive health as an essential part of health systems, including access to contraception, quality maternal and newborn health services, HIV prevention, and comprehensive sexuality education. It also works to advance gender equality and to empower women to decide freely on their fertility and sexuality free from coercion, discrimination and violence, including by preventing and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early, and forced marriage.

As part of these efforts, supporting the rights of indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous women and girls, to enjoy their full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and to live a life free of violence, is a priority for UNFPA.

Please provide information on the following:

A. System-Wide Action Plan to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025*

A major contribution to ensuring that UNFPA sustains progress in implementing the UN System Wide Action Plan on Indigenous Peoples is UNFPA's new Strategic Plan 2022: 2025. The Strategic Plan focuses on leaving no one behind and targets the furthest behind, taking into consideration factors and characteristics often associated with discrimination and exclusion, including ethnicity. To translate into action UNFPA's ambition to reach the furthest behind, UNFPA has developed a dedicated Operational Plan on Leaving No One Behind and Reaching the Furthest Behind which takes an organizational wide approach to these efforts.

- *Co-Chair of Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples 2020-2021*

At the global level, UNFPA has played an instrumental role in facilitating UN wide support for implementing the System Wide Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples, through its two years as Co-Chair (with UN-DESA) of the UN Inter-Agency Group on Indigenous Peoples (2020-2021). In 2020, UNFPA in partnership with DESA, led the process of developing the UN's Chief Executive Board (CEB) for Coordination (November 2020) the [Call to Action on Building an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Future with Indigenous Peoples](#).

The Call to Action echoes affirms at the highest level of UN system leadership, the commitment to support Member States in promoting, protecting and realizing the rights of indigenous peoples and to provide support to Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams to intensify efforts to implement the UN System-Wide Action Plan on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

To ensure implementation of the CEB Call to Action, UNFPA in its role as Co-Chair of IASG

has disseminated the Call to Action with Resident Coordinators (RCs) and their Offices and documented good practices from UN country teams. It is coordinating a three part 2022 dialogues series with RCs to strengthen their knowledge on the rights of indigenous peoples and the role of the UN in supporting the realization of these rights at the country level.

- *Supporting Normative-Operational Linkages*

UNFPA through its technical expertise and broad in-country presence provides a valuable contribution to strengthening normative operational linkages on the rights of indigenous peoples. This year an important opportunity for doing so was the UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)'s elaboration of a new General Comment on Indigenous Women and Girls. To inform the General Comment and ensure that it strengthens the normative framework for indigenous women and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights, UNFPA headquarters, and UNFPA Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office provided a comprehensive submission to CEDAW based on evidence and experiences from the field.

B. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- *Population Data*

The lack of data on indigenous people presents a major barrier to efforts to support their rights. Through UNFPA's unique role in the collection, analysis and use of population data for development, it has been promoting the greater disaggregation of data to strengthen the visibility of indigenous peoples. This is also key to tracking the extent to which the SDG targets are being met for indigenous peoples.

In **Kenya** as part of efforts to support the 2019 Kenya Population and Household Census, UNFPA joined with civil society partners to support the National Statistics Bureau of Kenya to create new tribal categories for indigenous peoples, who in previous decades were either uncounted or clustered with larger tribes.

In **Guatemala** and **Bolivia**, UNFPA has provided technical support to the population census for the self-identification of indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, which are included for the first time. This has enabled the locating of indigenous and Afro-descendent populations due to digital mapping, and identifying disparate development outcomes based on ethnicity and race. Similarly, in **Peru**, indigenous and Afro-descendant self-identification in the 2019 census was implemented. In **Paraguay** census questions focusing on indigenous peoples are being pilot tested, with 1200 census takers and 800 volunteers from indigenous populations being trained and mobilized to support this process. Similarly, in **Nepal**, UNFPA is supporting the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the 2021 census, including by supporting the recruitment of census takers from indigenous communities, training census takers to understand diversity and how to accurately record questions around ethnicity, language and religion, and consulting with indigenous communities on the proposed questions.

In **Costa Rica**, UNFPA is an active member of the Technical Commission of Ethnic-Racial Approach, working to improve the collection and dissemination of administrative data on indigenous peoples. UNFPA has provided technical guidelines on incorporating ethnic-racial data in National Statistics Systems, and as part of these efforts, has consulted with indigenous peoples on culturally appropriate methods to collect data among indigenous communities.

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Moreover, both in **Cameroon** and **Mali**, countries facing humanitarian and security crises, where the effected zones have a high preponderance of indigenous communities, UNFPA has ensured up to date and disaggregated data that captures the situation of these indigenous communities. As a result, their specific needs and rights are addressed in the different humanitarian response plans.

At the regional level, **UNFPA Latin America and Caribbean Office** is working in partnership with FILAC (*Fondo para el desarrollo de los Pueblos Indigenas de America Latina y Caribe*) to strengthen the Regional Indigenous Peoples Observatory by supporting its capacities to generate, use and analyze data on indigenous people.

- *Research and Evidence*

To better understand the social, cultural, political and economic determinants of indigenous peoples sexual and reproductive health (SRH), UNFPA Country Offices have carried out dedicated research to strengthen the evidence base. In **Bolivia** a comprehensive study on the Ayllus (indigenous communities) on their SRH and their social-cultural practices and beliefs has been completed; and in **Uganda**, studies of the Karamojong people to understand the burden of SRH, HIV and gender based violence against Karamojong women and girls is being finalized. Based on the data and evidence drawn from this research UNFPA can better design SRH and GBV programmes and advocate for greater attention to indigenous peoples. In **India**, UNFPA's advocacy with the Government on the vulnerable health status of tribal communities has strengthened attention to these communities by the Government and partners.

- *Gender Based Violence (GBV)*

A critical issue for indigenous women and girls is their lack of access to GBV services. Often services are not language or culturally appropriate or may be located in urban sites or by remote support which do not cater specifically for geographically isolated indigenous communities.

To help address the gap, the UNFPA **Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office** has documented: *“Promising practices and replicable intercultural models to prevent and respond to violence against indigenous women and girls”*¹This mapping was developed in partnership with leading indigenous organisations. The study provides the first conceptual framework for inter-cultural models to address GBV among indigenous communities and criteria that can guide the design, implementation and evaluation of these interventions. At the country level, to support inter-cultural GBV models, UNFPA **Cameroon** is supporting indigenous women's organisations to lead awareness raising activities on human rights and SRH for indigenous communities, and to participate in the development of GBV programmes in the country, as well as ensuring GBV services are available in indigenous languages. UNFPA **Bolivia** has facilitated in five indigenous amazon villages, inter-cultural dialogues between women and men on equality and prevention of violence against women, and in follow up to these dialogues, established a network of community defenders to refer cases of violence against women.

In **Mali**, reaching indigenous communities is a challenge with the majority of indigenous Tuareg communities residing in the northern and central part of the country, hardest hit by the humanitarian and security situation. To reach these nomadic communities, mobile GBV clinics have been established. In addition, Tuareg community leaders are sensitized and trained so that they can lead efforts to address GBV and harmful practices in their communities.

¹ <https://serviciosesencialesviolencia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MI-Resumen-Ejecutivo-Ingles-CC%81s-4.pdf>

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- *Harmful Practices*

The incidence of harmful practices, in particular, child marriage and female genital mutilation are disproportionately high among indigenous communities. As a result, UNFPA Country Offices are often targeting programmes in regions and communities with a high indigenous population. For example, in **India**, UNFPA is working in the states of Rajasthan and Odisha to reduce child marriage among tribal communities. In **Uganda**, UNFPA supports community-based organizations to eliminate FGM among Maasai, Samburu and West Pokot communities. Moreover, to better understand why and how these practices impact indigenous communities, UNFPA **South Africa** is working with leading national research organizations to collect data and evidence on the practice of FGM in indigenous communities, which will be finalized by 2022.

- *Culturally Appropriate Sexual and Reproductive Health Services*

UNFPA is working at the global, regional and country level to incorporate an inter-cultural approach into sexual and reproductive health services, including by supporting participatory processes where indigenous peoples participate in the design and delivery of health services; strengthening the recognition of traditional birth attendant's works, and training healthcare workforce on cultural appropriate responses.

In Latin America, UNFPA Country Offices such as **Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay** and **Peru**, together with indigenous women's organizations and governments have collaborated on initiatives to strengthen the relationship between TBAs (TBAs) and professionally trained maternity care providers, including midwives and link TBAs to the formal health systems. Initiatives used to strengthen partnerships have included developing collaborative relationships through opportunities for sharing of traditional and professional knowledge between TBAs and professional midwives, collaboration on in-service midwifery training and including TBAs as key 'links' in the referral pathway for skilled care at birth, as well as conducting trainings on inter-cultural appropriate health services for the health workforce. In **Mexico** UNFPA has also supported the knowledge, use and integration of traditional medicines into health systems. UNFPA **Ecuador** has developed guidance on culturally acceptable midwifery. While UNFPA **Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay** have trained a cadre of indigenous volunteers on SRH, who work in local health centres and serve as the nexus between indigenous communities and the local health centres.

Recognizing that indigenous migrants are at high risk of poor access to health services, including SRH, UNFPA **Costa Rica** has been working on a multi-year programme to support social and health services for indigenous migrants, working with employers and health care service centres in the 'hosting' communities, so that they can better respond to their needs and support their rights.

At the global level, UNFPA has led the development of the *International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on out of school comprehensive sexual education (CSE)* ² which recognizes that indigenous young people may be disproportionately out of school. They may also experience marginalization and vulnerabilities as they grow up within the intersection of at least two different cultures. Focus is given to culturally sensitive, contextualized, intercultural and trauma informed approaches in the delivery of CSE, understanding that indigenous young people may have traditional rites of passage or coming of age ceremonies and other behavioural practices that may impact on their SRHR, including transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancies, substance abuse, and limited or delayed access to SRHR services. The need for holistic engagement of entire indigenous communities such as parents and community

² https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Out_of_School_CSE_Guidance_with_References_for_Web.pdf

leaders towards intergenerational dialogues is underlined throughout the Guidance.

- *Supporting Participatory Processes and Indigenous Women's Organisations*

Addressing the barriers that indigenous women and girls face in the context of SRH and GBV requires working with and through indigenous organisations. These organisations understand their context, have access to the communities and their culture and can respectfully raise sensitive issues with women and girls, men and community leaders, using strategies adapted to the communities and their respective issues. The importance of developing interventions that allow indigenous women and girls themselves to identify cultural practices and gender relations that have negative effects on their health and well-being has been found to be critical.

The UNFPA **Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean** is proactively addressing this gap through a programme to strengthen the capacities of the *Indigenous Childhood and Adolescence Commission of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas* (ECMIA). It has produced a training course on advocacy and leadership for the 2030 agenda, the Montevideo Consensus on population and development; SRH and Gender Equality. Twenty-two indigenous young women leaders from twelve countries are taking the course. These young women leaders will be trained as trainers and will go on to conduct workshops to train other young women leaders in their communities.

Moreover, at the country level UNFPA helps facilitate spaces for indigenous women's organisations to participate in development processes and to advocate for their rights. In **Costa Rica**, UNFPA brought together indigenous women's leaders from different regions, and produced "*An agenda for indigenous women land defenders*"³ that aims to raise the visibility of their priorities and their role in defending their indigenous lands.

Within the UN country level development processes, UNFPA **India** and **Nepal** Country Office have advocated and facilitated consultation with indigenous peoples' organisations on the UN Common Country Assessment for the development of the UN Sustainable Development Process to ensure their rights are considered and addressed in the UN's work and reflect their priorities.

B. COVID-19 pandemic

UNFPA has led and contributed to UN inter-agency efforts to advocate and provide guidance for policy makers to support indigenous people's rights in the context of COVID-19. This includes:

- The IASG Guidance Note for the UN System on Indigenous Peoples and COVID-19.⁴
- The Interagency Latin America Regional Group on Indigenous People's Report on the situation of indigenous peoples in the region in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the country level, UNFPA in many countries has supported the targeting of indigenous communities with services to ensure they are not left behind in the COVID-19 response. For instance, by providing dignity kits to indigenous communities and/or ensuring COVID-19 services reach regions with high density of indigenous peoples (**Bolivia, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon and India**); raising awareness on the situation of indigenous peoples and the risks they face in the context of COVID-19 (**Mexico and Bolivia**), supporting inter-cultural approaches to COVID-19 services (**Mexico and Costa Rica**); translating information into indigenous languages, and ensuring that TBAs can continue to provide SRH support to indigenous women and girls during the pandemic.

³ https://costarica.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/agenda_mujeres_indigenas_sur_2021.pdf

⁴ https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/04/Indigenous-peoples-and-COVID_IASG_23.04.2020-EN.pdf