



Enhancing the Role of Indigenous Women in Sustainable Development

IFAD Experience with Indigenous Women in Latin America and Asia



**Third Session of the
Permanent Forum
on Indigenous Issues**

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ABBREVIATIONS

APPTDP	Andhra Pradesh Participatory Tribal Development Project
APTDP	Andhra Pradesh Tribal Development Project
CARC	Upper Basin of Cañar River Rural Development Project <i>Proyecto de Desarrollo Rural de la Cuenca Alta del Rio Cañar</i>
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CFI	Community Forestry International
FPIC	Free Prior Informed Consent
HPM	Ha Giang Development Project for Ethnic Minorities
ICRAF	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry
JFM	Joint Forest Management
MARENASS	Management of Natural Resources in the Southern Highlands Project <i>Proyecto de Manejo de los Recursos Naturales en la Sierra Sur</i>
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NERCRMP	North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project for Upland Areas
NSRDP	North Simbu Rural Development Projects
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
OCISP	Oudomxai Community Initiatives Support Project
OTDP	Orissa Tribal Development Project
PCUCH	Cuchumatanes Highlands Rural Development Project <i>Proyecto de Desarrollo Rural en la Sierra de los Cuchumatanes</i>
PRAIA	Regional Programme in Support of Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon Basin <i>Programa Regional de Apoyo a los Pueblos Indígenas de la Cuenca de las Amazonas</i>
PRODEPINE	Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples' Development Project <i>Proyecto de Desarrollo para los Pueblos Indígenas y Afro-Ecuatorianos</i>
PRODERQUI	Programme for Rural Development and Reconstruction in the Quiché Department <i>Programa de Desarrollo y Reconstrucción en El Quiché</i>
PRODESIB	Sustainable Development Project by Beni Indigenous People <i>Proyecto de Desarrollo Sostenible de los Indígenas del Beni</i>
PRODEVER	Programme for Rural Development for Las Verapaces <i>Programa de Desarrollo Rural de Las Verapaces</i>
PROSGIP/	Programme for the Strengthening of Gender Issues in IFAD Projects
PROFAGEP	<i>Programa para el Fortalecimiento de los Aspectos de Género en los Proyectos FIDA</i>
PROZACHI	Zacapa-Chiquimula Smallholders' Rural Development Project <i>Proyecto de Desarrollo Agrícola para Pequeños Productores en Zacapa y Chiquimula</i>
PWG	People's War Group
R&D	Research and Development
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SHG	Self-Help Group
TSL	Tangkhul Shanao Long
UNEP-CA	Camelid Producers Development Project in the Andean Plateau <i>Proyecto de Desarrollo de Camélidos en el Altiplano</i>
WID	Women in Development
WLF	Women's Livelihood Fund
WUPAP	Western Uplands Poverty-Alleviation Project

ABSTRACT

Since its inception, in its quest to “enable the rural poor to overcome their poverty”, IFAD has been focusing on women in general, and indigenous women in particular. For the Fund, in fact, gender equality and women’s empowerment are both objectives of, and instruments for, poverty reduction. In its operations, IFAD aims to: expand indigenous women’s access to and control over fundamental assets such as land, capital, knowledge and technologies; strengthen their agency or their decision-making role in community affairs and representation in local institutions; improve their well being; and reduce their workload by facilitating access to their entitlements by asserting their rights and securing their entitlements to services, infrastructure, etc. The Fund supports indigenous women because it realizes the great untapped capacity for sustainable development intrinsic in indigenous spirituality and cosmogony. Indigenous women have a significant potential role as ‘stewards’ of national and global natural resources and biodiversity. Indigenous women are also repositories of varied and locally rooted knowledge systems that make an important contribution to the world’s heritage. They are also rich in cultural diversity, a valuable quality. Significantly, indigenous women have a key role to play in peace brokering and conflict mitigation.

This paper highlights the concerns of indigenous women and the challenges they face. Based on IFAD’s past experience, it makes suggestions on how to expand and deepen their role in sustainable development. As most indigenous women live in marginal areas, where property rights are ill-defined, secure access to land, forests, water and related resources is a major issue. It is also important to address indigenous women’s basic human rights to food, health, education, intellectual property rights, culture, dignity and peace. The rights-based approach that IFAD has initiated in some countries recognizes that support to indigenous women’s claims to entitlements, enhancing their traditional knowledge systems, protection of their intellectual property rights and sensitivity to their culture, language and cosmogony can assist in mainstreaming their concerns into the development arena, on their own terms. It also acknowledges these elements as crucial to the building of partnerships, and the ownership, and hence sustainability, of development initiatives.

To assist indigenous women in overcoming their material poverty and in asserting their rights, and to contribute to sustainable development, the Fund supports interventions in three different areas: field operations, sharing of knowledge and policy advocacy. In terms of field operations, IFAD projects have focused on assisting indigenous women in obtaining titles to land and related resources. This has included support for accessing improved technologies and microfinance, and for the provision of the required capacity-building measures. IFAD’s efforts have contributed, in a culturally sensitive way, to a gender balance in the control of resources which often has translated into a shift in the unequal power relations within households and communities. IFAD also provides support in revitalizing traditional knowledge systems and in blending them, where appropriate, with modern technology; protecting intellectual property rights; promoting cultural expression, conflict mitigation and peace-building; strengthening indigenous women’s organizations and governance systems; and empowering indigenous women so that they can meet both their practical and strategic needs. Development of the Fund’s knowledge of indigenous women hinges on its ability to learn from its implementation experience in this area, by establishing effective monitoring and evaluation systems, working closely with cooperating institutions to improve impact assessment and strengthening its partnership with a range of different players (including other donors, non-governmental organizations and the private sector). The Fund has experienced some important but geographically limited success in policy advocacy. In order to play a greater role in this domain, it will work with other partners at the national, regional and international level to promote a global policy environment that recognizes the rights of indigenous women and enables them to play their role as stewards of the environment and traditional knowledge, guardians of their culture and brokers of peace.

The crucial role of indigenous women in rural poverty reduction and sustainable development has only recently received the attention it deserves in the development arena. Although much progress has been made, much remains to be done. Building on its past experience, IFAD is committed to investing more in indigenous women.

I. INTRODUCTIONⁱ

It is widely recognized that indigenous peoples are among the most marginalized and vulnerable groups and are afflicted by the most intractable material poverty – they constitute one third of the rural poor. ⁱⁱ Available evidence also indicates that indigenous peoples are being increasingly displaced from their customary lands and deprived of their natural resources by national or transnational interests; as a consequence of their marginalization, they are also victims of human rights violations. Within indigenous communities, women often represent the most disadvantaged category due to their lack of or limited access to assets such as land, literacy and credit or participation in decision-making processes. This situation denotes the so-called *feminization of poverty*.ⁱⁱⁱ These enduring and sometimes widening inequalities affect the ability of women to carry out their critical roles, thus undermining global human and economic growth and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Many factors contribute to generate this disadvantageous situation for women. The loss of lands, waters and forests experienced by indigenous peoples is especially deepening the poverty of indigenous women while increasing their domestic load and subsistence responsibilities. Since many indigenous women are also illiterate or have a low educational level, they continue to be excluded from job opportunities and community management roles. The introduction of the cash economy has eroded their independence as self-reliant food producers, healers, artisans, and spiritualists, and their role in production, in the economy and in community life has declined. They are further marginalized by cultures of patriarchy and violence, which confine women to the domestic sphere. Changes in traditional social, cultural and political institutions and practices have led to a loss of rules and codes of behaviour that have long been instruments in ensuring gender-sensitive structures. Indigenous women in many countries face numerous barriers in their access to education, health care, sanitation and other basic services, and are excluded from decision-making on programmes to meet these needs and entitlements. Their marginalization, which has been exacerbated by globalization policies, is increasing their vulnerability to violence, both sexual and physical. In search of jobs, many indigenous women are trafficked and are eventually pushed into prostitution.

II. WHY IFAD FOCUSES ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Since its inception, in its quest to “enable the rural poor to overcome their poverty”^{iv}, IFAD has focused on women in general, and indigenous women in particular. Indeed for the Fund, gender equality and women’s empowerment are both objectives of, and instruments for, poverty reduction. IFAD began with a Women in Development (WID) approach, devised to address the needs of marginal groups, which then evolved into a Gender and Development (GAD) approach, adopted in 1992. The GAD approach looks at gender roles and relationships; rather than designing separate activities for women, it adapts each project activity to take gender specificities into account. Gender mainstreaming is designed to provide both men and women with opportunities to access all project resources and services.^v

Everything in the universe is ruled in terms of Duality, heaven and earth, happiness and sadness, day and night and how they supplement each other. Everything is ruled in terms of Duality, undoubtedly, men and women. (María Estela Jocón, Maya woman)

To ensure gender mainstreaming in the Fund’s operations, both Asia and the Pacific Division and Latin America and the Caribbean Division have dedicated facilities. Since 1997, the Latin America and the Caribbean Division has been implementing a Programme for the Strengthening of Gender Issues in IFAD Projects (PROSGIP, also called PROFAGEP in Latin America). The objective of PROSGIP is to put women on an equal footing with men in development project activities and facilitate their access to productive resources, services and know-how, thus increasing their income and improving living conditions for themselves and their families. A programme to address gender inequalities and the vulnerability of women has also been implemented by Asia and the Pacific Division. Its objectives are as follows: (i) to promote women as agents of change in rural development; (ii) to suggest policy changes in gender relations and to reduce women’s vulnerability to trafficking and HIV/AIDS; (iii) to redesign gender-responsive rural development projects with attention to women’s roles in agricultural production; (iv) to promote women’s ownership rights to control over land, trees and other productive and financial resources; and (v) to increase democratic space for gender-responsive participatory governance in post-conflict situations.

In its operations, IFAD aims to: expand indigenous women’s access to and control over fundamental assets such as land, capital, knowledge and technologies; strengthen their agency, decision-making role in community affairs and representation in local institutions; improve their well being; and reduce their workload by facilitating access to their entitlements, asserting their rights and securing their entitlements to services, infrastructures, etc.^{vi} The Fund’s special interest in supporting indigenous women does not, however, stem only from issues of poverty reduction, social justice and humanitarian concerns; the Fund, in fact, acknowledges the great untapped potential for sustainable development intrinsic in indigenous spirituality and cosmogony.^{vii} First, indigenous value systems, which are based on a close

relationship with Nature and the Earth for both spiritual and subsistence needs, are such that indigenous women in particular play a crucial role in the stewardship of natural resources and biodiversity. Their potential as 'stewards' of national and global natural resources and biodiversity is increasingly acknowledged. Second, indigenous women are also the repositories of very rich, varied and locally rooted knowledge systems – ecosystem management and technologies, locally adapted seed varieties, medicinal plants, art and music – that make an important contribution to the world's heritage. Indigenous women are also rich in cultural diversity, a valuable commodity in a world threatened by an increasingly homogenizing trend brought about by globalization.

Limited provision of social services, weak governance and slow economic growth in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples have led them to mistrust national governments. In certain instances, the desire to control high value natural resources has also motivated disputes or conflicts, which often underlie ethnic tensions. For these reasons, areas inhabited by indigenous peoples have long been theatres for conflicts, which have also escalated into national concerns (seen for example in the Chiapas, Colombia, Nepal, Cambodia and North-East India). Paying due attention to the issues of indigenous women, who often act as peace-brokers and have a long tradition of conflict mitigation, would also be an important contribution to national and international stability and conflict prevention.

In its range of assistance to indigenous women, IFAD focused first on diversifying livelihood options and providing capacity-building to reduce their vulnerability. IFAD learned from these early experiences that gender concerns among indigenous peoples not only relate to ensuring equity and balance, but also to integrating plurality and diversity, based on the exercise of individual and collective rights. This realization and increased sensitivity to issues such as achieving greater impact and enhanced sustainability influenced policies and processes and brought about second and third-generation projects. These projects focused on vital issues such as: providing security of tenure; enabling self-empowerment through promotion of rights-based approaches; enhancing the agency^{viii} of indigenous women, improving market access and identifying niche markets for products collected, produced and/or processed by them; revitalizing indigenous knowledge; institutional strengthening; and creating apex bodies as a first step towards building coalitions capable of influencing policy at different levels (national, regional and international). While the Fund has accumulated a wealth of experience in working with indigenous women, efforts to document the experience and lessons learned, and to assess their impact are ongoing. This paper draws on IFAD's experience in Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions where the Fund has specifically identified indigenous peoples in general, and indigenous women in particular, as a major target group.^{ix} This paper is intended as a first step towards knowledge documentation by providing an overview of the type of activities in support of indigenous women in the context of the Fund's loans and grants programme. It also highlights some of the main lessons learned, in the belief that they can be of value not only to IFAD, but also to those committed to supporting indigenous women in their struggle for social and ecological justice, self-determination and peace.

III. ENHANCING THE ASSET BASE

ACCESS TO LAND AND RELATED RESOURCES

Access to land and security of tenure are crucial to achieving the objectives of poverty reduction, sustainable livelihood security and the valorization of indigenous cultural value systems. This process legitimizes the critical role of women as responsible resource managers. In order to facilitate this process, IFAD has supported many initiatives in different countries and regions. In several instances, traditional indigenous land rights are collective. Depending on the local context and enabling legislation, the Fund's support has taken different forms. For instance, in the Philippines, IFAD has facilitated the application of newly approved legislation, supported the process of land and forest-titling, and provided training and capacity-building to carry out these tasks in a participatory manner. The role of women in this participatory ancestral delineation of domains has often been underlined.^x Influencing policies in favour of land rights for indigenous communities has been a common activity in many IFAD-funded initiatives.^{xi} In addition, in several interventions, the Fund has assisted initiatives aimed at facilitating indigenous women's access to land and forests. In India, in the Orissa Tribal Development Project, land occupied by indigenous groups became transferable to women in the form of inheritable land rights (*donga pattas*). Project supervision missions pointed out that such land titling led to major improvements in natural resource management, with the incentives derived from clear property rights for women.^{xii} In Viet Nam, the Rural Income Diversification Project in Tuyen Quang Province is facilitating security of tenure of land resources through joint husband-wife registration of the land-use certificates.^{xiii} Similarly, in the Andhra Pradesh Participatory Tribal Development Project, women acquired land titles in their name (Box 1).

BOX 1 - FACILITATING INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND

Through the implementation of the Andhra Pradesh Participatory Tribal Development Project (APPTDP), IFAD helped women to obtain land titles and to manage them. The experience of Koya tribal women indicates that through the project's support several women received two acres in their names. Now, with land titles and the project-sponsored bore-wells, pumps and tanks, women can grow cash crops in their neighbourhood.

"I get 30 bags of rice from one acre of land and I grow lady's fingers and gourds for food at home. On the other acre I grow cashew nuts. I am also a ward member of the Panchayat [local governing body]. I am very happy". (Swandi Chinnika, Koya woman)

Source: Project Completion Review Report, 2003

In Indonesia, the creation of an enabling legal environment to help indigenous communities resolve conflicts over land is being supported by IFAD through the East Kalimantan Local Communities Empowerment Programme. The programme also aims to facilitate women's access to land. According to customary law, or *adat*, property rights can be classified into village rights (commonly recognized as being the village's ancestral land or household rights) over the land that is being cropped, and individual rights, transferable by sale or inheritance. Under traditional indigenous law, women have the same rights of inheritance than men.

The Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project in Nepal is a good example of creating new assets for landless and semi-landless women (Box 2).

BOX 2 - HILLS LEASEHOLD FORESTRY AND FORAGE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (HLFFD) - NEPAL

The twin objectives of this project - raising the incomes of indigenous families in the hills (such as Tamang, Danuwar, Praja, Magar and Majhi) who live below the poverty line and contributing to improving the ecology of the hills - were achieved by granting blocks of degraded forest to groups of poor households through a 40 year-lease agreement. The leasehold groups were granted exclusive user rights on the basis of an agreed management (or operational) plan. Between 1993 and 2001 some 7 000 hectares (ha) of degraded forest were handed over to about 1 600 groups consisting of more than 12 000 socially or economically disadvantaged families. Thanks to the introduction of Women Group Promoters, women constituted the majority of beneficiaries. They were also provided with appropriate training to enable them to diversify their enterprises. In spite of the enormous ecological variations, an impressive rehabilitation of multi-layered forest has occurred. Biodiversity has increased: in monitored sites the increase in plant species ranged from 57 to 86% over the period 1994-2000. Moreover, according to surveys carried out in 1996 and in 1999, the scarcity of animal feed significantly decreased, despite an increase in herd size. The vegetative cover of the leased land regenerated and improved, mainly as a result of improved management (control of grazing and fire as well as enrichment planting). This created a new asset for the exclusive use of the poorest women. With assured access to additional fodder production from the leased land, women were able to increase their income from livestock production and other activities (sale of fodder, milk and goats) as well as from sales of other forest products (spices, timber, etc). Finally, women gained about 2.5 hours per day to collect forest-based fodder and firewood. This has also enabled more children to attend school. Through the training programme, most women have acquired basic literacy skills, and the group members are much more aware of their legal rights and the importance of education and adequate health, sanitation and nutrition for themselves and their families. With the acquisition of leasehold land, many women have started cultivating mulberries and vegetables for sale. The income generated by this activity is used for children's school expenses, medicine, food, clothing and group savings.

"Women are now able to have a constructive discussion on household development at home. Even I used to think that only husbands must earn. When I think about this now, I feel guilty." (Saili Tamang)

"Because of our work and our ability to handle resources properly and efficiently, men have a different vision of women." (Krishna Pudasaini)

Source: Ohler, 2001, Draft Evaluation Report, 2003 and S. Subba A. Z. Babar, in "Mainstreaming Gender..." 2000.

The Fund has learned that giving women secure access to land and other natural resources can transform their lives. In economic terms, it can give them a more stable source of income and create new opportunities for earning cash. However, the benefits go beyond the economic. Women experience improved self-esteem and increased respect from their husbands, along with a corresponding shift in responsibilities and decision-making. IFAD has seen that these changes contribute to redressing the unequal power relations within households and communities that generate poverty. In the course of time, land titles for indigenous women should change the asset holding pattern and reverse power equations in indigenous communities in favour of women.

NATURAL CAPITAL

In most cases, facilitating access to forests and security of tenure have been accompanied by supportive measures in integrated natural resource management. For example, activities under the new Sustainable Rural Development Project for the Ngöbe-Buglé Territory and Adjoining Districts in Panama include fallow improvement in shifting cultivation, reforestation, soil and water-conservation practices, micro-watershed management, rural waste disposal, and natural resource and land-use conflict resolution. In the semi-arid Ningxia and Shaanxi regions in China, an IFAD-supported initiative aims at environmental conservation and poverty reduction by financing activities related to reforestation and afforestation, agroforestry through on-farm demonstration plots of species adapted to local conditions, desertification control, ecological conservation plantations, and the establishment of tree nurseries and windbreaks. In the Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups of the North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project for Upland Areas (NERCRMP) in India, women participated in community-based natural resource management, with the objective of preparing a plan (Natural Resource Management Plan) for the entire project period. The NRM groups have taken up activities that strengthen collective action and contribute to the improved quality of life of their members. Women members have been imbued with a sense of self-confidence and have displayed strong team-work abilities. Many other such examples exist.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Training and capacity-building, both technical and non-technical, figure prominently in almost all the Fund's interventions in support of indigenous women. Only those aspects most relevant to indigenous culture and specificity are highlighted here.

Without education, it is more difficult for women to move out of poverty and they enter into a vicious circle of reduced employment opportunities and occupational mobility, lower income, early marriage, poor child health care and increasing fertility. To overcome this problem, as part of the Ha Giang Development Project for Ethnic Minorities (HPM) in Viet Nam, a literacy programme targeted exclusively at women was launched. It benefited 1 500 indigenous women. Similarly, the Gender Technical Unit of the Ngöbe-Buglé Rural Development Project, in Panama, implemented a six-year programme to raise family awareness of the benefits of education for both women and children, in terms of better social and economic status. This project, under the Ministry of Education, has also coordinated the implementation of a literacy campaign, which included a bilingual educational programme for adult men and women.^{xiv} Similar programmes have been carried out in Oudomxai (Laos), North Simbu (Papua New Guinea), the Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project (in Nepal), in Tuyen Quang (Viet Nam), in the Regional Programme in Support of Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon Basin (PRAIA), in the Rural Development Project of Guaymi Communities (Panama) and in the Development Project for Marginal Rural Communities in the Ixtlera Region (Mexico). In several Fund-supported initiatives (in India, Nepal, Ecuador and Panama) legal literacy has also been provided on issues such as human and women's rights, access to land, water, etc. In Northern Mindanao in the Philippines, intercultural education is also expected to be provided to ensure cultural sensitivity towards indigenous issues, especially those concerning women.

Exchange visits are becoming an increasingly important feature of training. The Fund supports the sharing of experiences not only as a learning tool but also as a powerful empowering tool as it stimulates self-esteem and social cohesion among the indigenous women involved.

Revitalizing and Enhancing Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous women have long been custodians of valuable indigenous knowledge related to management of natural resources, including forests and their products. They often create their own locally adapted and accepted rules for the use of forests that frame their local 'institutions'. Through a process of learning, the Fund has realized the importance of building on these strengths, by revitalizing indigenous knowledge and blending it with modern technology. Recognition of such traditional assets is now widely taken account of as a legal right and leverage for future emancipation. The documentation of the Subanen women's knowledge is such an example.

**BOX 3 -- ENHANCING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS
AND PROTECTING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS IN WESTERN MINDANAO - THE PHILIPPINES**

In 2003, through a grant to the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), cultural practices for traditional rice varieties and the ethnobotanical knowledge of the Subanen indigenous communities, especially women, were documented in Lakewood, Western Mindanao. The objectives of this initiative were to: (i) facilitate local, participatory NRM planning over their ancestral domains; (ii) assist indigenous organizations in observing their customary laws in the conduct of the documentation process; (iii) establish the property rights of local communities over their knowledge systems and practices; and (iv) ensure that no biological specimens or genetic resources leave the area without the free and prior informed consent (FPIC) of the concerned communities. As a result of this documentation, over 500 plants and their uses (food source, medicinal, etc.) were identified and catalogued, and 60 rice germ plasmids were identified. Twenty-six of the latter were identified as endangered. During a Farmers' Congress, it was decided that indigenous women, the seedkeepers and seedcarers, would be assisted for in-situ propagation of these endangered rice species. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Government authorities to secure, on behalf of the communities and based on their specific requests and directions, intellectual property rights and options for obtaining benefits from any future commercial or beneficial use of their knowledge and to ensure the FPIC of the community before any results are shared with a third party. This ongoing initiative is expected to produce a community register of all ethnobotanical knowledge documented and generate culturally sensitive learning materials for extension agents and Subanen students leading to greater appreciation of beneficial agroforestry practices and ethnobotanical knowledge.

Source: Vel J. Sumingquit, Documenting Ethnobotanical Knowledge and Protecting Community Intellectual Property Rights of the Subanen, 2004

Under the same initiative, a similar process is being planned in Indonesia, where the NRM practices of Dayak women in traditional home gardens in East Kalimantan will be documented.

Starting with the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Development Project (APTDP), IFAD-supported initiatives have aimed to revitalize traditional soil and water conservation methods in their areas of intervention. Several efficient and low-cost indigenous technologies such as percolation ponds and pitcher irrigation have been revived leading to assured water sources, and have considerably improved the livelihoods of indigenous communities. In the Ha Giang project in Viet Nam and the Western Uplands Poverty-Alleviation Project in Nepal (WUPAP), traditional medicinal systems are being strengthened and upgraded.

BOX 4 -- REVITALIZATION AND DOCUMENTATION OF TRADITIONAL HEALTH SYSTEMS - NEPAL AND VIET NAM

In Nepal, the WUPAP is supporting a pilot initiative aimed at reviving and strengthening traditional local health systems practised by women, based on the use of medicinal plants. The programme will also finance the establishment of community-based medicinal herb gardens operated by women. Their skills will be upgraded and a referral system to western medicine will be established. The Ha Giang Development Project for Ethnic Minorities in Viet Nam is incorporating traditional medicinal knowledge into its training manuals for voluntary health workers, and the booklet *Traditional Medicinal Herbs at Home* has been compiled.

Source: IFAD Appraisal and Formulation Reports (1999, 2001)

The most successful examples of technology blending have also introduced a research and development (R&D) component to increase quality and production of forest products or to develop new ones. A case in point is the work undertaken in Andhra Pradesh, where new valuable products have been developed through a cost-effective R&D component.

BOX 5 -- BLENDING OF MODERN AND TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGIES - INDIA

In the APTDP, the implementation of an R&D component supported studies on the adhesive gum *karaya*, which has resulted in the development of four forms of value added products, i.e. powder, granules, cream and gel. Training programmes were organized for local people in improved tapping processes. Within a short period, the quality of gum increased substantially and the prices for various grades of gum increased by up to 250%. Through R&D, new products were developed from the 'cleaning nut' or *Aram* (*Strychnos potatorum*), including development of a derivative that acts as a substitute for the water purifying agents Alum and Natfloc-2200. The bio-flocculant extracted from the cleaning nut can also be used to clean nuclear waste.

Source: Project Completion Report, Ministry of Tribal Welfare, Andhra Pradesh, and UNOPS Supervision Reports (1996-2002)

The varieties of indigenous species found in forests are precious resources that represent valuable assets for poor indigenous women. Conservation of germ plasmids of high value species and their multiplication, and the sale of tree products have been a successful poverty reduction strategy for indigenous women whose natural endowments were declining.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

An important lesson IFAD has learned is the value of strengthening existing organizations and traditional governance systems for sustainable development. This reinforces the role of communities in the decision-making process and in negotiating or bargaining with other parties, be they local or national authorities, the private sector, or international development institutions. Traditional governance structures at the village level (*Gram Sabhas*) were also used in the implementation of several IFAD-funded projects in India (Jharkhand-Chattisgarh Tribal Development Programme and Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme). Through gender and equity-awareness training, these institutions, generally male and elite-dominated, were made more representative and now include women in their decision-making structures, which are implementing projects at the local level. The Cuchumatanes Highlands Rural Development Project in Guatemala, the Management of Natural Resources in the Southern Highlands Project (MARENASS) in Peru and the Ngöbe-Buglè project in Panama provide further examples of institutions made more inclusive.

In most instances, the promotion of self-help groups (SHGs) creates additional social capital that can be used for other purposes. For example, several women's self-help groups promoted in IFAD-supported initiatives in India act as service providers (e.g. setting up tree nurseries) or as substitutes for contractors (e.g. in soil and moisture conservation work). An innovative initiative is currently underway, in partnership with Community Forestry International (CFI), in Andhra Pradesh. Here, women's SHGs have been linked to Joint Forestry Management initiatives, so that both can gain by providing environmental services under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and influence policy at the national and international level.

BOX 6 - WOMEN'S SELF-HELP GROUPS AND CARBON TRADING - ANDHRA PRADESH - INDIA

This initiative, cofinanced with the Canadian International Development Agency, aims at strengthening the institutional capacity of SHGs to manage carbon and other funds generated via environmental services. In Adilabad, over 13 000 SHGs were promoted under a previous initiative supported by the Fund. They are currently being federated in order to increase their institutional capacities and bargaining power vis-à-vis government agencies and other actors. With 700 000 ha of mixed teak forests, the district has immense potential for forest protection/regeneration and environmental services. There is an ongoing successful joint forest management (JFM) partnership between the forest department and local communities: 1 000 forest protection committees protect some 300 000 ha of degraded forests and, thanks to community protection, improvement in the forest cover at a rate of 1-2% per year is being registered. The initiative supported by IFAD thus strengthens the capacity of women-administered SHGs to link and expand the work of JFM, manage natural resources, develop livelihood-enhancing activities and broker environmental services. A state working group is being established to oversee the initiative, allowing learning about federation formation to be reviewed for its policy implications and its extension into other areas across the state. Last year, through CFI, the voices of the federation of SHGs were heard at the Eighth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention, to influence policies related to carbon trading. The event stressed the need to develop CDM guidelines based on field experience and empirical research rather than being crafted exclusively by negotiators with limited understanding of field realities.

"We are losing our forests and crop productivity is declining. If we get together we can organize ourselves and deal with these problems. Together we have a lot of strength, so together we can represent ourselves better." (Parvatibhai)

Source: Community Forestry International, *Communities and Climate Change*, 2002

POLITICAL CAPITAL

Enabling Self-Empowerment

The specificity of indigenous women is such that all initiatives affecting their lives require their early and sustained input to ensure that initiatives respond to their priorities and are in consonance with their culture and spirituality. This, in turn, will assist in achieving sustainable development and impact on their livelihoods and environment. Interventions formulated and implemented in partnership with indigenous women's organizations have reached this dual objective.

The objective should not be for the populations to participate in IFAD's development projects, but IFAD that participates in the development process of the populations. (Statement by the President of IFAD at the World Bank Conference on Sustainable Development, 1994)

Asserting Rights and Securing Entitlements

The Western Uplands Poverty Alleviation Project in Nepal was the first IFAD project to adopt a rights-based approach. It aims to reduce the high level of discrimination towards indigenous peoples, especially women by (i) sensitizing community and civil servants on human rights issues; (ii) offering incentives to communities that meet specific gender equity objectives; (iii) raising awareness of women's constitutional rights through studies, information and awareness-raising campaigns; (iv) furthering policy dialogue by reporting human rights violations, training people on human rights issues, funding policy reviews and promoting dialogue with community organizations; and (v) establishing a legal defence fund to defray the costs of legal actions. Legal defence funds have also been established in several initiatives in

India (Jharkhand-Chattisgarh and Orissa) to minimize exploitation and protect the rights of indigenous women and men. Legal assistance was also provided in projects that included titling of ancestral land, such as the Ngöbe project in Panama, the Upper Basin of the Cañar River Rural Development Project (CARC) in Ecuador, the Rural Development Programme for Las Verapaces in Guatemala and the Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples' Development Project (PRODEPINE). In the latter two, legal assistance was also given through grants from the International Land Coalition, an IFAD partner.

In Guatemala, IFAD supported, through the Zacapa-Chiquimula Smallholders' Rural Development Project (PROZACHI), the rural development of small producers belonging to the Chortí group. PROZACHI helped 2 368 women obtain their birth certificates. By the end of the project in 1998, 2 488 loans had allowed women to invest in poultry production, artisanal activities and small enterprises. Apart from boosting household income, it also improved women's self-esteem and strengthened their role in the community. Through the project, women assumed leadership roles in community services such as the organization of children's care centres, literacy programmes, and training in preventive and reproductive health. To support this process, the project also provided small loans to reduce women's domestic workload (introduction of ovens and manual corn grinders).

In Bolivia, the Sustainable Development Project by Beni Indigenous People (PRODESIB) is also making an effort to provide identity documents to indigenous women.^{xv} In addition, the project is helping indigenous communities to obtain legal status, an essential prerequisite to becoming beneficiaries of productive projects.

Management of Financial Resources

IFAD has recognized that capacity-building, self-development and ownership can be considerably strengthened by entrusting women's (and communities') groups with the direct management of financial resources for development work. The Fund believes that indigenous women lack opportunity rather than capacity. Hence in recent initiatives, funds are channelled, through project implementation agencies, directly to interest groups promoted by the projects. In India for example, the natural resource management groups in the North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project manage funds for watershed and other natural resource management activities. Since the successful implementation of this component, all subsequent projects in the country (Jharkhand-Chattisgarh, Orissa and Gujarat) have successfully applied the same methodology. Recently, federations of these women's groups have taken on multiple functions in addressing social and administrative issues at the block and sub-divisional level. They have also taken up issues like construction of toilets, repair of roads, improvement in drinking water and electricity supply. In 2001, a Women's Livelihood Fund (WLF) was established in the Rural Income Diversification Project in Tuyen Quang Province in Viet Nam. This fund is being managed and implemented at the WLF-village group level.

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Microfinance has been one of the most common instruments used by IFAD for rural poverty reduction and women's empowerment. The achievements of many IFAD-supported projects have confirmed the positive impact of microfinance in enhancing women's access to independent income; this increases their control over the management of the household's assets and budget. Facilitating women's access to credit, through microfinance activities based on savings and credit, has proved successful in generating additional income, jobs and microenterprises. Moreover, the creation of solidarity groups has often provided women with a structure of mutual support that has proved particularly effective in empowering women to begin to strive collectively for social change as well as a powerful tool in promoting the concept of self-reliance. Microfinance, in a nutshell, has clearly been of benefit in many aspects of women's lives, such as their mobility, social visibility, dignity and self-esteem. Thus, microcredit can be considered a useful example of a strategic gender intervention, with wide-ranging advantages. Microfinance has developed different models including SHGs, revolving funds and special credit facilities.

Self-help groups. These are small affinity groups that mobilize their own savings, which are then used as loans to group members. Earnings from interest income are converted into group equity. SHGs managing their own savings have been particularly successful with indigenous women, especially in projects in India, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, but also in many other initiatives supported by the Fund. IFAD has often facilitated the promotion of federations of SHGs. For example, microfinance activities were carried out among Tangkhul women in the Ukhrul district of Manipur state, India. NERCRMP helped to introduce informal credit and savings groups by sending 15 members of the Tangkhul Shanao Long (TSL), an apex women's organization, to visit project areas in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, where such groups were operating. The visiting women studied group operation and learned from it. By the year 2000, 69 groups with a total of 1 375 women members were operating in 22 villages. The accumulated group savings were lent to each member in turn; women used these resources to develop income-generating activities in which they had experience (poultry and pig-raising, growing of maize and potatoes and weaving).^{xvi} This organization also played an important role in promoting human rights and conflict mitigation (Box 8). Similar successful initiatives were carried out in practically all projects in the Asia/Pacific region. IFAD's experience in Latin America also shows

the importance for women to organize themselves into groups in order to increase their mobility, strengthen their decision-making power and improve their income. In Bolivia, the Chuquisaca South Rural Development Project promoted the formation of women's groups, training them in activities related to health, nutrition, hygiene and improvements in living conditions, as well as promoting productive activities, most notably weaving.^{xvii} In the region inhabited by Beni people, IFAD also supported the creation of women's groups in all indigenous communities through PRODESIB. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, SHGs have played an important role in improving women's agency.

Revolving funds. Managed by communities, revolving funds have shown very good results in regional solidarity funds in Mexico and rural development funds in Belize, Honduras and many other countries.

Special credit facilities. These have been developed in China in projects such as the Yunnan-Simao Minorities Area Agricultural Development Project, aimed at financially vulnerable households, which provided loans to about 21 000 borrowers from a total of 80 000 beneficiary households.

IV. EXPANDING LIVELIHOOD OPTIONS

Several IFAD-supported interventions have sought to increase the resilience of indigenous women by expanding their livelihood options. All provide clear examples of win-win situations and have paid handsome dividends in reducing poverty while improving the environment and its biodiversity.

Rewarding indigenous women and men for the environmental services they provide would allow for the establishment of sustainable mechanisms aimed at enhancing both the environment and the livelihoods of indigenous communities, while reducing their poverty. Clear opportunities are now seen to be emerging in this respect. However, the current successes in environmental transfer payments regarding carbon sequestration (Malaysia, Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile, etc.) have only benefited large landowners and concessionaires. In addition, there is a danger that some types of transfer payment mechanisms currently evolving could be implemented to the disadvantage of poor communities, actually exacerbating the displacement of poor people from their localities, depriving them of their main sources of livelihood and increasing their poverty. In fact, to reduce transaction costs, lands traditionally held and managed by small communities under customary law, could be entrusted to large concessionaires for the establishment of plantations, thus evicting the concerned communities.^{xviii} There are also risks that concerns of national and global societies about biodiversity protection and the hydrological services of watersheds may negatively affect the welfare and land rights of indigenous communities.

Conscious of these issues, IFAD has responded proactively to create the basis for promoting institutional mechanisms for recognizing and rewarding indigenous women and men who provide these services. IFAD approved a grant, in support of an ICRAF initiative and in partnership with a consortium of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs),^{xix} national and local NGOs, and national and regional research institutions, for the development, testing and refinement of working models for implementing successful environmental transfer payments to poor indigenous communities. The project focuses on watershed services (by developing effective linkages between upstream and downstream water-users), carbon sequestration, biodiversity protection and eco-labelling. It uses existing methods for quantifying, monitoring and verifying environmental services and their relations to land-use practices, tailoring them to the landscapes of Asia. The use of trust funds are about to be tested as a means of creating a continuous flow of benefits to communities. Special emphasis is placed on establishing supportive policy frameworks and dissemination of lessons learned from the action research undertaken. In each concerned country, a national working group has been established to oversee and monitor the process, learn early lessons, especially their policy implications, and extend successful cases to other areas across the country.

V. THE VULNERABILITY CONTEXT

Indigenous women (and men) are vulnerable to shocks and stresses. These can be natural (drought, flooding, earthquakes) or man-made. For example, attempts to sedentarize shifting cultivation have been detrimental to the livelihoods of the people concerned, especially to those of women. The Oudomxai Community Initiatives Support Project in Laos is providing alternative livelihood systems through the development of sustainable agricultural systems and by diversifying non-farm income through cultivation, harvesting and group-marketing of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for former shifting cultivators. In India, the Livelihood Security Project for Earthquake-Affected Rural Households in Gujarat has adopted a vulnerability-based approach enabling beneficiaries to cope with risk. IFAD's operations in Gujarat followed the violent earthquake that struck the region in 2001. The project selected three districts of Gujarat – Patan, Surendranagar and Kutch – characterized by a large mix of ethnic groups, and targets in particular

salt workers, landless households and woman-headed households. Microfinance based on the SHG model has been provided to households for management of both *ex-ante* and *ex-post* risk^{xx}. This approach to microfinance combined credit, savings, micro-insurance and in-kind banking. The project forged a partnership with the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union of women in the informal sector. The Gujarat Mahila Housing SEWA Trust, an NGO established within the SEWA group, implemented a participatory design of earthquake-resistant houses and built community capacity to adopt an integrated development process.

Conflict Mitigation, Peace-Building and Reconciliation

A strong geographical correlation exists between conflicts and the areas inhabited by indigenous peoples. IFAD has gained some experience (e.g. in Guatemala and India) in peace-building by promoting multi-stakeholder participation and involving indigenous women as peace-brokers. While men are more likely to be involved in direct combat, women are more affected by violence and economic instability during armed conflicts. During violent conflicts, women are victims of rape, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking. War often turns women into household heads, and this role may signal discrimination and a food and health crisis for the family.

The APTDP offers an unusual opportunity to examine the role of development assistance in conflict mitigation, in particular by assessing the relationship between a radical protest movement, Naxalism, and the operation of a participatory development project.

BOX 7 - : THE ANDHRA PRADESH TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT - INDIA

The APTDP contributed to reducing insurgency activities in the project area. During the seventies and eighties, the project area witnessed a campaign mounted by the People's War Group (PWG) which in its early stages at least appears to have been motivated by a genuine desire to end the exploitation of indigenous peoples and achieve for them a measure of social justice in terms of land, resources and opportunities. The lack of access to land was a prime grievance of the tribal peoples that led them to support the Naxalite movement. IFAD's facilitation role significantly contributed to raising awareness within the Government and among civil servants of the protest movement and the need for a process of change in bureaucratic attitudes that favoured more listening and greater partnership-orientation in the effort to promote the development of the *Girijans*. The APTDP brought about the establishment of Village Tribal Development Associations, in many cases led by women, which engaged in participatory contract procedures for the construction of irrigation and soil-conservation works and related activities. This created an atmosphere of optimism and empowerment and weakened the Naxalite movement in the project area.

Source: *Evaluation Report, IFAD, 2001*

The Tangkhul women of North East India provide a good example of the role indigenous women often play in protecting human rights and brokering peace.

BOX 8 - TANGKHUL SHANAO LONG IN MANIPUR - North East INDIA

In Manipur state in North East India, Tangkhul women organized themselves in one of the most widely respected welfare-cum-human-rights organizations in the region, namely the Tangkhul Shanao Long (TSL). This is an apex women's community organization that came into being in 1974. Since India's independence (1947), a protracted conflict between the local people's quest for freedom and the sovereignty of the Indian nation state has aggravated the socio-economic vulnerability of the poor. Today, TSL is well known for its role in promoting human rights and as a major force in local society. Besides assisting the victims of violence, organizing awareness campaigns and playing a mediating role between the people and the authorities for maintaining peace in the region, TSL is also engaged in a host of social activities designed to uplift women. Its membership is broad-based, with subsidiary units in all villages and towns inhabited by Tangkhul.

Source: *T. Nongbri, in "Mainstreaming Gender..." 2000*

Reconstructing the Productive Base (Focusing on Women)

A critical step in post-conflict situations is to help the rural poor to 're-establish' themselves as independent producers. In this phase, a strong gender focus is also necessary, not only because the number of woman-headed households usually increases during and after the period of strife, but also because women can act as effective peace-brokers. Women, in fact, often hold the key to reconciliation and reconstruction. Some of the most effective peace agreements have included women in the negotiations and resulted in measures that empower women and protect their rights to land, property and inheritance.

BOX 9 - SUPPORT TO THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE QUICHÉ DEPARTMENT AND LAS VERAPACES- GUATEMALA

In the early eighties, violent strife hit Quiché department and Las Verapaces, two of the poorest areas of Guatemala. One of the characteristics of the violence in Guatemala was its concentration in rural areas, thus affecting small villages and remote settlements. Programmes have been carried out by the government coordinating agency responsible for implementing the peace agreement. The agency's operations have been decentralized through local government, in order to strengthen the capacity of grass-roots organizations to undertake their own development planning and implementing activities. IFAD interventions helped in the recapitalization of productive units of indigenous small farmers, some of which were destroyed and abandoned during the several years of violence. IFAD activities also promoted the rights of indigenous communities over their territory and their natural resources. IFAD projects applied a clear cross-cutting gender mainstreaming approach and methodology, developing specific actions in each of the components to promote women's participation on an increasing basis in all project activities. Technical and financial assistance to indigenous and rural women has been provided in areas where women had a comparative advantage, such as fruit and vegetable production, poultry and pig production, handicrafts and small agro-industry

Source: *Misión de Evaluación Ex-Ante, IFAD August 1999*

VI. HOLISTIC APPROACH TO GENDER RELATIONS

A holistic perspective to gender relations implies looking at the totality of social organization, and economic and political life in order to understand the shaping of particular aspects of society. It is not concerned with women *per se* but with the social construction and structure of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities and expectations to women and men. A holistic approach to gender, highlights the family as a microsystem, recognizing the interrelation of roles between women and men. IFAD has supported several projects with a focus on the family, in order to stimulate a genuine rethinking in the roles of household members and foster new opportunities for dialogue, negotiation and planning among all the members. Recognizing that gender equity concerns not only women, IFAD introduced in PROZACHI (Guatemala) the 'development couple', group promoters who work in pairs to facilitate relations between women and men in the community. This innovative component is being replicated in many of the region's projects. In Peru, MARENASS has shown that gender relations can be dealt with through this holistic approach. MARENASS has adopted a systemic vision for natural resource management that valorizes women as productive elements of their society; in this way women have been the focal point for resource management while men have played the part of producers.

BOX 10 - THE INNOVATIVE METHODS OF MARENASS - PERU

MARENASS introduced an innovative method to create incentives for project participation. Families or entire communities are competing for the best results in animal management, agricultural production, soil conservation, marketing, housing improvements or community organization. The winner of the competition is awarded cash, transferred from MARENASS to the community leaders, who pass it on to the family or community in question. These competitions involve the entire family in a reappraisal of the roles of heads of household, women and young people. The gender training, oriented basically towards establishing community, family, and individual rights and strengthened by the competition mechanism among families, has had considerable impact, directly modifying the conditions under which relationships among family members evolve.

Source: *Evaluación de las actividades de manejo de recursos naturales con enfoque de género en MARENASS, IFAD September 2000, External Evaluation Report*

This approach was also adopted by the Cuchumatanes Highlands Rural Development Project in Guatemala, and the Camelid Producers Development Project in the Andean High Plateau (UNEPICA), a grant that assists the Ayamara and Quechua peoples of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru. The former project focused on improving nutrition and incomes by incrementing traditional crop production, diversifying crops with fruit and vegetables and starting small-scale farm irrigation schemes, reaching 8 000 Maya families, where 45% of the beneficiaries were women. UNEPICA supports small producers' organizations to improve the competitiveness of their products. It has created links among small herders and small entrepreneurs in order to avoid the middlemen who control prices. Apart from constituting an important part of the economy, the camelids also represent a material expression of the Ayamara and Quechua culture in the highlands. Traditionally, grazing, the most important daily activity for livestock care, is carried out by women. Women also participate in many other activities, such as skinning and cleaning the animals. Both projects sought to save women's time and labour for more productive uses. For example, where women had previously spent hours minding animals grazing in the commons, the building of moving yards has meant that livestock can graze alone while women use their time for income-generating activities. This has also allowed children to attend school instead of following their mothers in their herding tasks.^{xxi}

Culture

Until recently, it had not been the norm to include activities geared at promoting cultural expression. However, in some instances, the Fund has supported the validation and strengthening of various expressions of indigenous culture, not only to preserve cultural diversity, but also to stimulate self-esteem, a sense of identity and social cohesion. There are a few examples of projects that have supported cultural festivals to celebrate the success of project activities, such as the Chuquisaca North Agricultural Development Project and the Chuquisaca South Rural Development Project in Bolivia. The most innovative experience in this field is probably that of MARENASS in Peru (Box 10). PRAIA addresses the valorization and diffusion of indigenous cultures in the Amazon Basin.

BOX 11 - REGIONAL PROGRAMME IN SUPPORT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE AMAZON BASIN (PRAIA)

Funded through a technical assistant grant, PRAIA provides direct support to indigenous communities to implement their own small-scale economic and cultural development projects. To date, 140 projects have been launched, focusing on land delineation and recognition of land rights, ecotourism, crafts, education, arts and culture, and microenterprise management. Many regional workshops to facilitate sharing of experiences and mutual learning have been financed. Similarly, PRAIA has financed several publications directly linked to indigenous cultural value systems. Policies in some countries have been influenced; for example, an ecotourism project in Mapajo, Bolivia, has been adopted as a model for increasing income, improving living conditions and ensuring environmental protection in indigenous territories throughout the country, while proposals for bilingual and intercultural education developed under the Ticuna Teachers' Training Project in Brazil have been incorporated into the national curriculum for primary schools. PRAIA has applied a gender focus in its various operations and activities. For example, the handicraft project of Artecampo, Bolivia, meant a number of important changes for women. Apart from economic benefits, women gained self-esteem through being respected as artists by their husbands and the rest of the men of their communities.

"It's not that women are getting together to produce ceramic or [vegetable] oils but to make it possible for the female voice of the communities to be heard in local organizations and in natural resources management, because the projects that work are those whose efforts are not concentrated on the hands but rather on the heart, and women represent a great part of the heart"

Source: Evaluation Report, Technical Assistance Grant Proposal (1997, 2001) and Experiencia Viva, 2002

The gender focus of the Mapajo project allowed for a clear perspective on the roles of men and women as it successfully identified the activities in which women wanted to engage, without adding to their already heavy workload. One visible result is an unprecedented reversal of domestic responsibilities whereby some men now stay at home to cook and take care of the children, while women engage in tourism activities outside the home.

VII. POLICIES AND PROCESSES

The Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project in Nepal (Box 2) has had a tremendous impact on the forestry policy process of Nepal. In 2001, in view of its successful outcome, the Government of Nepal adopted leasehold forestry as a critical policy area in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process. The Government is currently scaling up the concept. In 2001, the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation started the leasehold concept in 16 new districts with its own resources. It has also passed a new leasehold policy addressing, inter alia, previous weaknesses in the existing legislation.

Both the Ticuna Teachers' Training Project in Brazil and the Mapajo Ecotourism Project in Bolivia have also influenced national policies.

Redistributive Policies and Influencing Processes

With a focus on redressing indigenous communities' decreasing access to land, the newly approved Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme in India expects to support the creation and implementation of redistributive policies regarding land and influencing market forces. Strategies include:

- Land Restoration Support: Fielding of mobile squads and increasing the courts' capacity for disposing of cases. The programme finances operational costs for improved detection and disposal of land alienation cases and monitoring enforcement of land restoration orders.
- Studies on: displacement of tribals, indebtedness, food security issues, studies on NTFP marketing, extent of land alienation and unrecorded possession, and access to green bamboo. A Policy Support Fund to respond to the findings of these studies has also been established.
- Conferment of ownership rights to hill slopes between 10⁰ and 30⁰; communities had been cultivating these lands, without title, for many decades under shifting and settled cultivation. The programme will support the implementation of special surveys and the settlement process and provide technical support in programme villages as priority. Women will be given special attention.

- Monitoring that due publicity is given to access to land records that are in the process of being computerized by the Government of Orissa.
- Addressing marketing issues and promoting value addition through processing of NTFPs. This would involve supporting the implementation of an enabling NTFP policy, capacity-building at the *panchayat* level, and participatory price fixation, monitoring and regulation. The programme will also promote market yards for NTFPs, a market information system, storage, users' groups and their federations, and value addition at the village level.
- IFAD has advocated that the government reconsider its policy regarding about 120 000 ha of cashew plantations, established on land previously cultivated by indigenous communities who were subsequently evicted (without compensation). It has also offered to establish a pilot programme to encourage *palli sabhas* (village level groups) to take up the management and upgrading of these plantations.

Promoting Enhanced Partnerships

Meeting the twin goals of attaining the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development cannot be realized without entering into enhanced partnerships. IFAD has increasingly engaged in brokering such partnerships. Recently it has also started experimenting with partnerships with the private sector to create market links between small producers and private entrepreneurs in order to promote market assistance and provide technical assistance, e.g. in the rubber industry in Mexico. In Nepal, a public-private partnership involving a number of stakeholders has been initiated.

BOX 12 - NTFP CULTIVATION - A MODEL OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP - NEPAL

The WUPAP in Nepal has a unique component for promoting partnership with the private sector to domesticate NTFP production and undertake contract farming with beneficiaries. The interested private-sector firm is an Indian health-care company with a subsidiary in Nepal. A grant is also being used to adapt domestication of selected NTFPs; an NGO is working closely with the private company to conduct trials in four districts. The trials test yields, measure their economic and social benefits and recommend the most appropriate methods for dissemination. The company will provide the technology, select sites and train beneficiaries organized in groups by the NGO. It will invest in technological trials, disseminate successful results, make planting material available and buy back production at a previously agreed price.

Source: IFAD Appraisal and Formulation Reports (1999, 2001)

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED

To mainstream indigenous women's concerns and perspectives at all levels and to reach the dual objective of sustainable poverty reduction and the preservation/enhancement of indigenous livelihoods, IFAD has seen that it is necessary to go beyond the conventional project mode.

Through its field experience, the Fund has learned the following key lessons:

- *Focusing on women.* Experience worldwide indicates that indigenous women can ensure sustainable development and biodiversity conservation/enhancement. By addressing the structural obstacles to the advancement of indigenous women, the Fund has sought to facilitate the redefinition of gender roles and relations in the family and society. Efforts to enhance women's capabilities to promote social transformation, rural and economic development, and the peace agenda have begun bearing fruit. Such efforts must encompass not only women's social needs and economic empowerment, but also their increased participation in community organizations and in the political process, thereby building capacity and self-esteem.
- *Building on women's strengths.* Indigenous women have long been custodians of valuable indigenous knowledge related to the management of natural resources. The Fund has realized the importance of revitalizing indigenous knowledge and blending it, where appropriate, with modern technology to achieve a greater and more sustained impact. Nevertheless, *research support* is often required to increase productivity and improve and/or develop new products at reduced costs
- *Ensuring equitable distribution of resources and benefits.* The design and implementation of policy and legislation (tenure, benefit-sharing, free prior and informed consent, intellectual property rights, etc.) need to acknowledge that communities are not homogeneous and that mechanisms need to be established to provide equitable representation of women and allow for transparency, accountability and conflict resolution.^{xxi} Often mechanisms need to be developed to ensure that the rights and interests of indigenous women are protected, without sacrificing the potential gains of others.
- *Adopting a holistic approach.* In approaching women in general and indigenous women in particular, there is a need for a holistic perspective that embraces the totality of the social organization, and economic and political life in which the household is embedded. This approach is also required in view of the plurality and diversity that characterize indigenous communities. Moreover, sensitivity to cultural issues and language is an essential ingredient. The promotion of indigenous culture and languages has proved a key element in the strengthening of indigenous women's identity.

- *Putting natural resources and other assets in the hands of women.* As demonstrated in Nepal, creating new natural capital by transferring long-term usufruct rights to forest assets to women can be a powerful poverty reduction strategy that also enhances biodiversity. Secure access or ownership rights to natural resources need to be pursued systematically as they pave the way for compensating local people for the environmental services these resources provide. Moreover, recognizing local rights over natural resources can help prevent conflicts. Similarly, access to new financial assets (through microcredit, local development funds, etc.) has proved an important ingredient for self-empowerment and building confidence and self-esteem. Ultimately the involvement of local women producers in policy negotiations, either directly or through partners, will result in more practical and realistic laws and regulations.
- *Entrusting women's groups with funds and resources.* IFAD has long recognized that capacity-building, self-development and ownership can be considerably enhanced by entrusting women's groups with the direct management of resources and funds. This has been borne out by several initiatives in India and Viet Nam where funds are channelled through project implementation agencies, directly to interest groups promoted by the projects.
- *Rights-based approach to development planning.* Recent experience indicates that such an approach may be required when dealing with indigenous women.^{xxiii} In all instances, training women on their rights has proved extremely useful as it increases their awareness of the claims they can make and provides opportunities for enhancing their political capital and their participation in the policy process. Similarly, the establishment of legal defence funds has assisted indigenous women in asserting their claims and accessing their entitlements.
- *Scaling-up of isolated successes.* Using resources to catalyse the linking up of local success stories and spread skills and benefits of development investments more evenly throughout the rural space has started bearing fruit in both poverty reduction and biodiversity enhancement.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S VOICES - SELECTED EXAMPLES

MAKING THEIR OWN CHOICES - Women's priorities in Self-Help Groups (APPTDP, India)

Research on the effects of Self-Help Groups on gender empowerment was conducted in 1998 in the village of Cinnanallabali. Drawing on a successful experience of a women's SHG, the study pointed out how women's priorities can be different from men's choices and signaled the importance for women to make their own decisions.

The women of Cinnanallabali belonged to SHGs and were so successful that men began to pay attention: the women were making more money, obtaining loans and helping each other. The men decided they, too, wanted to join but the women firmly refused. The women feared that men would want to dominate them even in their group. "*The men do as they please in the home and outside it. They work more impulsively and have different priorities*", they said. If men were to join, the interest of women might take second place. Thus, men have now formed their own group and, following the women's example, they hope to build up savings and have access to loans.

Each time group members convene, they have to decide who, among competing claimants, should receive a loan. Each candidate must explain why the loan is needed and the group decides how best to use its limited funds. While the ordering of their priorities is not always predictable, the rationale behind their decisions shows that they choose carefully. Regarding health and marriage, priority was given to people who needed a loan for medicine or medical care, because "you can't get a person dead back". Ranked second to health was money for a daughter's marriage. At first, this seemed wasteful. However a daughter's marriage is extremely important, particularly because it removes a financial burden from the girl's family. Loans for education and agriculture came third and fourth.

SHGs for men and women had different priorities with respect to education and agriculture. Whereas the women's groups preferred to give loans for education, feeling that education was important for their children's future, the men's groups favoured agricultural loans, because their prime responsibility was to ensure income and food security.

Source: Mabinthy Kanu, India and Nepal, Human Stories of Rural Poor, IFAD, January 2000

**OVERCOMING BARRIERS TOGETHER - The autobiography of María Carmen Tene Serango.
(Saraguro-Yacuambi, Ecuador)**

I was born on 24 January 1964 in the community of Piching, province of Loja, Republic of Ecuador. My parents are indigenous. I grew up in a small village in the south of the country. When I was at school, I used to get together with my classmates to discuss problems we had with our teachers, who did not allow us to speak in our language, Quichua. Teachers maltreated us physically and psychologically, mocking us for our indigenous identity. In 1980 I was studying at art college while working at the same time as a bilingual teacher in the indigenous community of San Lucas, Loja province. A year later I married and stopped studying, but carried on teaching. Even though it was very difficult, having had my first child, I organized indigenous women's groups. In 1984, I felt the need to study again; my parents were against my decision because of my role of mother and wife, but I had already made my choice. From 1985 to 1989 I directed the indigenous women's group at the community level. I realized that the number of indigenous women involved in decision-making processes within their households or communities was extremely low. Men, complaining, often said to me: "What are you teaching women!? They have started talking during the meetings, they want to participate in decision-making processes!" In 1989 I started management studies at university but after one year I gave up because the indigenous communities asked me to work again as a bilingual teacher: it was in this year that bilingual education officially started in Ecuador. In 1990, I was selected as secretary of the Inter-Provincial Coordination of Indigenous Saraguro Organization (CIOIS). I faced several difficulties because of male obstructionism, but I had to defend women's rights. During 1992-1993 I directed the women's organizations of San Lucas and in 1993 I participated at the Congress of the Indigenous Nationalities' Confederation of Ecuador (CONAIE), the most important organization in the country, involving 4 million indigenous and rural peoples. The following year, I was chosen to be Women's Director for the Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui Organization (ECUARUNARI), to represent indigenous women from Sierra and Coastal regions.

I work to ensure that we, the women, can take decisions with our own voice, that nobody makes decisions for us. We want to establish our own objectives, our own self-valuation, our own rights as women.

Between 1994 and 1996 I was working with women's organizations at the national level, involving indigenous, rural and afro-Ecuadorian communities. We worked on self-valuation, self-esteem, cultural identity and women's participation in all activities. I also set up a school for women leaders. Then, I participated in several regional and international meetings and events (e.g. the First Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women in Quito and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing).

To be where I am today and play a part in all this, I had to break through many barriers within my family and society, overcoming gender discrimination, racial and cultural discrimination, machismo and the authoritarianism of the leaders.

I learned that the best weapons in convincing my husband, my parents and the leaders have been Love and Patience. I organized women's organizations because women have to be considered as subjects and not as objects anymore.

Source: Concurso Autobiografías de Mujeres, FIDAMERICA 1997

MARENASS THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

María Luisa López, of the Anacomba community in Apurimac, describes how the project made a change in her life:

"(...) Last year, our organization decided to open a rural enterprise -a bakery- with the help of MARENASS. We hired someone to teach us. The maize and the wheat that we produce we grind into flour, we use wood for fuel, and we get the yeast from the *chicha* dregs, but we must buy commercial flour, sugar and other supplies. Three housewives work on each batch. They all take their turns; if one of us cannot come, there is always someone who volunteers to replace her since she'll earn more that way. Each batch produces 700 loaves. Everything we produce is sold to the local people of Anacomba.

Before we start baking we did not earn anything, we only did our household chores -which we still do now- and we helped out in the field, together with our children. Now we have our money. For the first time, our husbands help us in the housework, because we also work just like them".

Source: Tales of the 21st Century: Mexico and Peru, IFAD 2001

HISTORY OF SHG FORMATION IN MOVAD - Andhra Pradesh (APTDP, India)

The first woman's thrift and saving group or *Auwal* (mother's) committee in Movad village was formed by the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) in 1993. The original *Auwal* group consisted of about 50 to 60 Gond women. Each month, the women members would contribute INR 5 to a savings account; the group sustained a low level of activity until the IFAD project initiated a watershed project through the ITDA. The women's group was mobilized to implement the watershed treatment project. Parvatibhai, a young Gond mother, played an important role in this development. She helped mobilize the SHGs in her village and later initiated a multi-village SHG cluster. Parvatibhai's group was awarded the first contract in 2001, with three other groups securing watershed project contracts in 2001. By 2003, the four groups had been involved in contour-bunding, check dam building, and construction of small water tanks. Each group maintains its own independent bank account where funds are deposited. Most of the women members of SHGs in Modav village are illiterate and none of the members had ever gone to a bank before the SHG was formed. Now, they are able to conduct transactions with the rural bank. Parvatibhai and her associates adopted a strategy based on developing a consensus-based solidarity, which can increase economic empowerment. The women discovered that they could compete for, and win, development contracts, once they were organized.

Source: Empowering the Poor, Community-Based Environmental and Financial Management in Adilabad District, India, Community Forestry International 2004

STORIES FROM THE FIELD - Cuchumatanes Region of Guatemala

Ricarda, 37 years old, lives with her husband and five children in a single room, where she also stores potatoes. She lives in Huiton, a very poor area. She must walk a kilometre to gather firewood, then work the land, plant potatoes and look after the few chickens and pigs they have, while the children look after the sheep. The children have no milk and eat primarily potatoes, maize tortillas and every so often beans. In three years, the Cuchumatanes Highlands Rural Development Project provided her with technical assistance, training and marketing support as well as a loan. Now she plants potatoes using a new technique and this has improved the crop. She also plants forage and oats, something she didn't do before because the crops would wither. The seeds she received under the project, however, have given good results. Ricarda and her family were able to build several water cisterns and now only when they run dry is it necessary to walk two and a half hours to fetch more water.

"I now know other people who have the same problems as we have. Before, I didn't speak to anybody. I'm really happy." (Ricarda)

Juana is 22 years old. Her husband and four children are Maya and speak Mam. It is an effort for them to speak and understand Spanish. She fetches firewood at four in the morning and prepares tortillas for breakfast in the only room they have. After breakfast her husband helps her with the potato crop. The project loaned Juana 32 000 Quetzales (approximately USD 500), which she has not yet been able to repay because the last crop was ruined by frost.

"Life is hard, but I think things might be better for my children. We now have schools. There were none before. I didn't have the chance to go to school, but they will be able to." (Juana)

Guadalupe, is one of the 71 members forming the *Cooperativa Agrícola Integral Paquixeña Cuchumateca* at Paquix. Thanks to project services and training, the farmers - who previously had either never or only briefly attended school - are now managers, assistant bookkeepers and loan officers, marketing their own produce with doubled returns. They have been exporting potatoes to Honduras, along with some vegetables, carrots, oats and beets. They had no access to bank credit before, but with project loan assistance Guadalupe's cooperative set up a rural savings bank and is now able to grant loans to its members.

Source: Stories from the Field, Guatemala. In the Words of Our Clients. From interviews conducted in March 2001

STORIES FROM THE FIELD - Development of the Puno-Cusco Corridor Project (Peru)

"Today the participation of women has grown. Now, there is more equality in gender relations; before, women did not have the opportunity to take part in decision-making processes at community or village level, while now, thanks to the training that we are receiving, we are experiencing more equality. The project is supporting women, I noticed that there is already equal participation between women and men; before men did not take women into account, we were unemployed and we had to be subject to men's economy. Now, through the support of the Corridor project, I don't have to ask money to my husband to buy the bus ticket to Acora, anymore." (Alicia Huanaccuni de Poma, President of the Association of Jung Producers of Acora)

Source: Reportes del Corredor, Number 10, Sept-October 2003

ENDNOTES

ⁱ This document was prepared by Vanda Altarelli assisted by Giulia Pedone. The support of the staff of the Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Asia and the Pacific Divisions has been fundamental towards its completion.

ⁱⁱ “Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from the other sectors of society now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.” (United Nations Document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/87)

ⁱⁱⁱ “That is, among the poor, women have especially higher capability deprivation than men.” In IFAD’s Assessment of Rural Poverty in Asia and the Pacific Region.

^{iv} Strategic Framework for IFAD 2002-2006

^v Gender Perspective: focus on the rural poor. An overview of gender issues in IFAD-assisted projects and Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in IFAD’s Operations, Plan of Action 2003-2006, IFAD April 2003

^{vi} *Ibidem*

^{vii} Valuing Diversity in Sustainable Development, IFAD, 2002 and Indigenous Peoples and Sustainable Development, IFAD, 2003

^{viii} Agency is the capacity for autonomous action in the face of constricting social sanctions and structural inequalities.

^{ix} Examples from Africa are not included because IFAD defines its target group there in terms of vulnerability and poverty rather than ethnicity.

^x Philippines Association for Intercultural Development, Progress Report of the IFAD/NGO Extended Cooperation Programme, 2003.

^{xi} Alto Mayo Rural Development Project in Peru, Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples’ Development Project, and Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project in the Philippines, etc.

^{xii} UNOPS Supervision Reports of Orissa Tribal Development Project, July 1996

^{xiii} IFAD, President’s Report, 2001

^{xiv} IFAD Misión de Evaluación, 2001 and, Informe de Evaluación Final, 2002

^{xv} Indigenous women usually have no identity documents; for example, the census of the Chimane indigenous territory shows that more than 90% of women lack birth certificates. Communication with CIDDEBENI (Centro de Investigación y Documentación para el Desarrollo del Beni).

^{xvi} T. Nongbri, Empowering women through Self-Help Groups: a case study of three Naga villages in Manipur state, India, in: Mainstreaming... Op. cit.

^{xvii} Mid-Term Report, IFAD 1993

^{xviii} This would also adversely impact local biodiversity.

^{xix} The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, World Resources Institute, World Wide Fund for Nature, Conservation International, Winrock International for Agricultural Development and Community Forestry International.

^{xx} *Ex-ante* risk management has been undertaken through cultivation of drought-tolerant, fodder-rich crops such as millet and sorghum. *Ex-post* risk management has been through creation of wage-employment and operation of fodder depots offering subsidized prices.

^{xxi} Ms Raquel Peña-Montenegro, Director, Latin America and the Caribbean Division, personal communication.

^{xxii} Experience indicates that external backing, awareness-raising and capacity-building of the poorest groups are often required to ensure that a transparent and pro-poor governance structure is put in place to establish and implement local rules regulating natural resource use.

^{xxiii} The draft UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, ILO Conventions 107 and 169, or any other international convention that makes specific reference to the rights of indigenous women.



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