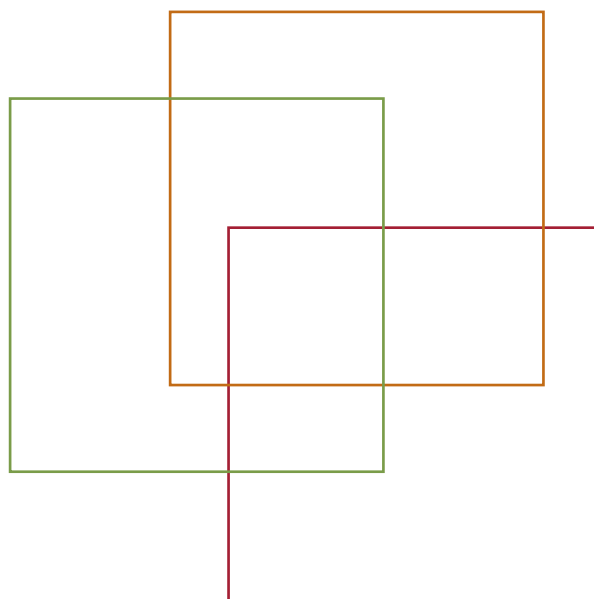




International
Labour
Office
Geneva

Indigenous peoples and climate change

*From victims to change agents
through decent work*



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE, GENEVA

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GENDER, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY BRANCH
GREEN JOBS PROGRAMME

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE, GENEVA

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Preface

The adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change, was a major achievement by the international community and the two instruments are expected to translate into major efforts by countries across the globe to review and reinforce their strategies, plans and programmes to bring about inclusive and sustainable development for all. The United Nations system, including the ILO, is expected to support member States in implementing these new and innovative frameworks for development and climate action.

Global policy debates and a growing body of research emphasize that indigenous peoples remain among the poorest of the poor while also being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. At the same time, it is now recognized that indigenous peoples make critical contributions to efforts to combat climate change and its impacts.

The present report explores why indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to climate change and what could be done to support them in their role as agents of change. In this regard, the report specifically focuses on access to decent work, sustainable enterprises for green growth, and the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), which provides a framework for protecting rights, creating sustainable enterprises, promoting dialogue and participation, and reconciling diverse interests in search of common solutions.

It is hoped that the report will contribute to the ongoing debates among and between ILO constituents, indigenous peoples, the United Nations and development partners, and lead to progress in achieving sustainable and inclusive development that leaves no one behind.

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Executive summary

The present report analyses the situation of indigenous peoples in the context of climate change. It suggests that indigenous peoples are affected in distinctive ways by climate change, and also by the policies or actions that are aimed at addressing it. At the same time, it highlights that, as agents of change, indigenous peoples are essential to the success of policies and measures directed towards mitigating and adapting to climate change, and to just transition policies as workers. On the one hand, given the scale and scope of the threats that they face with regard to climate change - including specific threats to their livelihoods, cultures and ways of life - their situation is different from that of other groups and from that of the poor. On the other hand, indigenous peoples, with their traditional knowledge and occupations, have a unique role to play in climate action, cutting across both climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, and also just transition policies.

Consequently, in order for climate action to be successful, indigenous peoples must be seen as powerful agents of change, accorded access to decent work opportunities and the ability to participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of sustainable policies and measures aimed at combating climate change. Simultaneously, it is also essential that the factors which make indigenous peoples uniquely vulnerable to climate change be addressed in a distinct and targeted manner.

A unique combination of threats

The report identifies six characteristics that indigenous peoples share where climate policies and the impacts of climate change are concerned. No other group in society has this combination of characteristics.

First, indigenous peoples are among the poorest of the poor, and thus the most threatened segment of the world's population in terms of social, economic and environmental vulnerability. Nearly 15 per cent of the world's poor are indigenous peoples, even though indigenous peoples constitute an estimated 5 per cent of the world's population. At the same time, up to 80 per cent of over 370 million indigenous peoples worldwide are spread across Asia and the Pacific, a region particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The World Bank estimates that, of the 100 million people across the world that could be pushed back into poverty as a consequence of climate change, 13 million people in East Asia and the Pacific could fall into poverty by 2030. This implies that indigenous peoples could be the worst affected.

Such figures highlight an important and difficult challenge in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted with the pledge that “no one will be left behind”. Surmounting this challenge will require focusing on indigenous peoples and harnessing their potential as agents of change and development.



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Second, for their economic, social and cultural activities, indigenous peoples depend on renewable natural resources that are most at risk to climate variability and extremes. At the same time, the sustainable and productive use of natural resources is a key factor driving green growth and of vital importance in combating climate change. Around 70 million indigenous peoples are dependent on forests to meet their livelihood needs. Although they account for 5 per cent of the world's population, they care for and protect 22 per cent of the Earth's surface and 80 per cent of the planet's biodiversity. Consequently, their role is of particular importance both in the sustainable management of resources and in environmental and biodiversity conservation, which are essential for combating climate change.

Third, they live in geographical regions and ecosystems that are the most vulnerable to climate change. These include polar regions, humid tropical forests, high mountains, small islands, coastal regions, and arid and semi-arid lands, among others. The impacts of climate change in such regions have strong implications for the ecosystem-based livelihoods on which many indigenous peoples depend. Moreover, in some regions such as the Pacific, the very existence of many indigenous territories is under threat from rising sea levels that not only pose a grave threat to indigenous peoples' livelihoods but also to their cultures and ways of life.

Fourth, their extreme vulnerability and exposure to climate change can force indigenous peoples to migrate. In most cases this is not an adequate solution for adapting to climate change, and instead renders them more vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and environmental hazards in their destination areas. Such migration often also leads to the loss of their traditional economic, social and cultural activities. Equally important, it leads to the loss of traditional knowledge, and this knowledge is essential for climate action to be successful. At the



same time, the transition to work in other activities within the destination areas is particularly challenging for indigenous peoples, especially for indigenous women.

Fifth, gender inequality, which is a key factor in the deprivation suffered by indigenous women, is exacerbated by climate change. While indigenous women play a vital role in traditional and non-traditional means of livelihood, unpaid care work, and food security, they often face discrimination from within and outside their communities. Furthermore, they are frequently forced to work in precarious conditions where they lack adequate access to social protection and are exposed to gender-based violence. Climate change threatens to exacerbate indigenous women's particular vulnerability to discrimination, exclusion and exploitation, while creating new risks from the impacts of climate change.

Sixth, and lastly, indigenous peoples, their rights, and their institutions often lack recognition. Consequently, consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples in decision making is limited in the absence of dedicated public mechanisms established for this purpose. Exclusion from decision making processes is also compounded by the limited capacity of their own institutions, organizations and networks.

The lack of consultation and participation is a root cause of social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities, and also of discrimination and exploitation. This applies even more to the indigenous poor than to their non-indigenous counterparts: the social, cultural and economic needs of indigenous peoples are usually not addressed in public policies, and these peoples are rarely well represented in political and institutional arenas. In some cases, alliances with workers' organizations have the potential of improving their influence. In this context, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) provides an important framework for strengthening dialogue among all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples' organizations, governments, trade unions and employers' organizations, to ensure meaningful consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making.

Powerful change agents

In spite – or perhaps because – of the six factors outlined above, this group possesses two unique characteristics, inherent in no other group, which make them key agents of change in climate action.

The first is the primary dependence of the economy of indigenous peoples on natural resources and ecosystems, with which they also share a complex cultural relationship. As natural capital is their core productive asset, their economic activity does not allow it to depreciate; their incomes depend on the value that they derive from nature, for example fish, bush-meat, fruit, mushrooms, medicines, roots, and construction and other productive materials. This means that 370 million people, approximately the size of the US population, are at the vanguard of running a modern economic model based on the principles of a sustainable green economy. This is particularly important for climate change mitigation, especially regarding efforts directed at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. For instance, Brazilian forests managed by indigenous peoples have shown a 27 times less in emissions due to their near-zero deforestation, as compared to forests outside their protected area.



The second is the exceptional nature of the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and their cultural approaches, which are of high relevance and value for climate change adaptation. For example, climate-smart agriculture incorporates a combination of traditional and modern techniques, which is one of the most cited and promoted techniques aimed at mitigating, and adapting to, climate change. Similarly, genetic databanks, set up by private and public initiatives, are benefiting from and often dependent on indigenous knowledge. Research has also found several traditional and innovative adaptive practices that can enhance resilience of communities, ranging from improved building technologies to rainwater harvesting and community-based disaster risk reduction.

Role of the Decent Work Agenda

The ILO has been at the forefront of promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, inclusive social protection floors, employment and livelihood opportunities, along with sustainable enterprises, including cooperatives, and has a significant role to play in the efforts to address climate change and achieve sustainable development. A key objective of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is to empower indigenous women and men, which is crucial to ensuring a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.

The ILO's targeted programmes and strategies, including those related to green jobs and indigenous peoples, are instrumental in realizing the potential of indigenous peoples as crucial agents of change. They are also important for building on their traditional knowledge systems for effective climate action, and for poverty reduction and green growth. Guided by Convention No. 169, which calls for ensuring indigenous peoples' consultation and participation in decision-making, the ILO approach to indigenous peoples' empowerment promotes social solutions to environmental problems and is well positioned to address the threats stemming from climate change.

1. Introduction

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ has stated unequivocally that human influence on the climate system is clear: emissions of greenhouse gases from human activity are the highest in history, and recent changes in the climate have had a significant impact on human and natural systems across the world. Climate change has already increased the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat-waves, wildfires and cyclones, and has contributed to changing rainfall patterns and rising sea levels. Such extremes and variability in the climate harm people directly and have severe implications for ecosystems, the world of work, health, livelihoods, food production, infrastructure, settlements and other areas that are fundamental to human well-being.

A just transition,² achieved by means of inclusive mitigation measures aimed at reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, and inclusive adaptation measures aimed at minimizing vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change, is thus crucial for building sustainable and resilient societies. In this context, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,³ the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction⁴ and the Paris Agreement⁵ on climate change highlight the growing international concern and commitment to addressing climate change and its social, environmental and economic implications.

Indigenous peoples are among the first to experience the direct impacts of climate change, even though they contribute little to greenhouse-gas emissions.⁶ They are also directly affected by environmental destruction, which is a leading cause of climate change, such as deforestation, land degradation, and pollution from mining and oil and gas extraction. Climate change poses severe threats to their livelihoods, cultures, identities and ways of life because the majority of indigenous peoples have a close cultural relationship with the environment, and are often dependent on land and natural resources to meet their livelihood needs. Climate change also risks enhancing their existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities.

¹ IPCC: "Summary for Policymakers", in Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds): *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Geneva, IPCC, 2014), pp. 2–31.

² For more information, see ILO: *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* (Geneva, 2015).

³ For more information, see United Nations: *Sustainable Development Goals*, UN, n.d., <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals> [accessed 9 June 2016].

⁴ For more information, see United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction: *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, UNISDR, n.d., <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework> [accessed: 9 June 2016].

⁵ For more information, see the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015, http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php [accessed: 9 June 2016].

⁶ United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: *Backgrounder: Climate change and indigenous peoples*, UNPFII, n.d., http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/backgrounder%20climate%20change_FINAL.pdf [accessed: 6 June 2016].



The IPCC has stressed that people who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses.⁷ This finding is particularly significant for indigenous peoples, as they continue to be among the poorest sections of the society and face a range of social and economic disadvantages. These include the lack of recognition and protection of their human rights, including rights to land and to be consulted and to participate in decision-making, and their resulting lack of involvement in the formation of public policies. Insecurity over livelihoods, land alienation, forced migration, loss of identity and culture, discrimination and exploitation in the world of work, and limited access to opportunities are additional key challenges. Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination and exploitation from both within and outside their communities. They are also increasingly forced to work in precarious working conditions where they lack adequate access to social protection and are exposed to gender-based violence.

The combination of such social, economic, political and environmental issues faced by indigenous women and men places them in a unique position of vulnerability to climate change, compared to other groups in society, including the poor. Consequently, climate change and exclusionary adaptation and mitigation responses pose a threat to the cultural diversity of the planet and risk exacerbating the impoverishment of indigenous peoples.⁸

At the same time, however, indigenous peoples are crucial agents of change because their livelihood systems, occupations, traditional knowledge and ways of life are essential for combating climate change effectively.⁹ This is particularly so in the case of mitigation efforts directed at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, fostering conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (such as REDD+), as well as the adaptation of agricultural practices to climate change. In such contexts, capitalizing on indigenous peoples' comparative advantage when it comes to combating climate change by securing their access to decent work opportunities and promoting sustainable enterprises such as cooperatives, and ensuring that indigenous peoples are not left behind, are fundamental to attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building sustainable, inclusive and resilient societies.

The ILO has been at the forefront of promoting the rights of indigenous peoples and has an important role to play in tackling the new challenges stemming from climate change, and the existing challenges that indigenous peoples face from the environmental destruction that leads to climate change. The approach followed by the ILO through the Decent Work Agenda strives to empower indigenous women and men, which is crucial to achieve a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and society for all. A just transition of the workforce¹⁰ cannot be realized without the inclusion of indigenous peoples, especially given that they have

⁷ IPCC. "Summary for Policymakers", in C.B. Field, V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken et al. (eds): *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1–32.

⁸ On the impoverishment of indigenous peoples, see page 21 in UN: *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (New York, 2009).

⁹ The Paris Agreement explicitly recognizes the importance of indigenous peoples' knowledge in climate action. For more information, see the Paris Agreement, http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php [accessed: 9 June 2016].

¹⁰ For more information, see the Paris Agreement, http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php [accessed: 9 June 2016].

contributed little to greenhouse-gas emissions but disproportionately suffer the harmful effects of climate change.

The ILO's targeted programmes and focus areas, such as the Green Jobs Programme,¹¹ are also key to realizing indigenous peoples' potential as crucial agents of change, and building on their traditional knowledge systems for effective climate action, as well as poverty reduction and green growth. Guided by the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), which provides a framework for ensuring indigenous peoples' consultation and participation in decision-making, and other ILO instruments, such as the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), together with those providing guidance on creating social protection floors and promoting transitions to formality,¹² an ILO approach to indigenous peoples' empowerment promotes social solutions to environmental problems and is well positioned to address the threats posed by climate change.



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¹¹ For more information, see *Green jobs*, ILO, n.d., <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/lang--en/index.htm> [accessed 10 June 2016].

¹² See the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202); and Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204). The texts of all ILO instruments are available at: www.ilo.org/normes.

Indigenous peoples: dedicated international instruments and frameworks

- *ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention*, 1989 (No. 169) — the only international treaty on indigenous peoples that is open to ratification. It has been ratified by 22 countries so far
- *ILO Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention*, 1957 (No. 107) — the previous ILO instrument on the issue. Though no longer open to ratification, it remains in force in 17 countries
- *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2007 — the most recent expression of indigenous peoples' aspirations at the international level
- *World Conference on Indigenous Peoples*, 2014 — a forum at which States reaffirmed their commitment to respecting, promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples
- *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015 — adopted in 2015 with a pledge to leave no one behind, it called on indigenous peoples to engage actively in its implementation, follow-up and review
- *Paris Agreement*, 2015 — outcome of the 2015 summit on climate change, at which States highlighted the importance of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge in combating climate change

2. Who are “indigenous peoples”?

There is no single universal definition of indigenous and tribal peoples. Convention No. 169 provides a set of objective and subjective criteria that may be used to identify these groups.¹ Using the terms “indigenous” and “tribal” peoples and giving both groups the same set of rights, the Convention offers a practical and inclusive approach for identification that also recognizes self-identification as a fundamental criterion (see following table). For practical reasons, the present report uses the term “indigenous peoples”, as this is now commonly used at the international level to refer to these groups.

Furthermore, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples has noted that, in several countries, for instance in the Asian region, while the vast majority of the population may be considered, in a literal sense, indigenous to the region, there are particular groups that distinguish themselves from the broader population and fall within the scope of the international concern for indigenous peoples.² These include, among others, groups that are referred to as “tribal peoples”, “hill tribes”, “scheduled tribes”, and “Adivasis” or “Janajatis”, which in some countries, although not recognized as “indigenous peoples”, receive targeted attention in development planning, programmes and schemes.³ In Africa, the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and the Communities of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights have made important contributions to clarifying the concept of indigenous peoples in the African context, taking into consideration the case of nomadic and pastoral communities.⁴

¹ ILO: *Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Handbook for ILO Tripartite Constituents*, International Labour Standards Department (Geneva, 2013).

² UN: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya: Consultation on the Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Asia* (General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 2013).

³ For instance, even though the Government of India does not consider any specific section of its population to be an “indigenous people”, several legal provisions, and also development policies, programmes and schemes, target the administrative category of “scheduled tribe”. See C.R. Bijoy, S. Gopalakrishnan and S. Khanna: *India and the rights of indigenous peoples* (Chiang Mai, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, 2010).

⁴ For more information, see *Report of the African Commission’s Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities*, African Commission’s Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa, 2013, <http://www.achpr.org/mechanisms/indigenous-populations/report-working-group/> [accessed 30 June 2016]. See also ILO: *Overview Report of the Research Project by the International Labour Organization and the ACHPR on the constitutional and legislative protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in 24 African countries* (Geneva, 2009).

Identifying indigenous peoples

The ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), sets out criteria for identifying the peoples concerned:

	Subjective criteria	Objective criteria
Indigenous peoples	Self-identification as belonging to an indigenous people.	Descent from populations who inhabited the country or geographical region at the time of conquest, colonization or establishment of present State boundaries. They retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, irrespective of their legal status.
Tribal peoples	Self-identification as belonging to a tribal people.	Their social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community. Their status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations.

Source: ILO: *Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Handbook for ILO Tripartite Constituents*, International Labour Standards Department (Geneva, 2013).



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3. Why do indigenous peoples face threats from climate change not experienced by other groups of society?

The World Bank has highlighted that climate change shares a relationship with the “key social dimensions of vulnerability, social justice, and equity”.¹ It acts as a multiplier of existing vulnerabilities and exacerbates development challenges. The poor in developing countries bear the brunt of its consequences, even though they have contributed little to its causes. Indigenous peoples, most of whom are in developing countries, are overrepresented among the poor and, furthermore, whose rights, livelihoods, cultures, identities and ways of life are already threatened by a range of social, economic and environmental issues, face an additional layer of threat from climate change.

It is important to highlight that the risks that climate change poses for indigenous peoples differ from the risks that it poses for other groups in society, including the poor (in their entirety). This is because indigenous peoples share six characteristics that, in combination, are not present in any other group. Thus they are especially vulnerable to the direct impacts of climate change; to the impacts of environmental destruction that leads to climate change; and to mitigation and adaptation measures.

First, indigenous peoples are among the poorest of the poor, the stratum most vulnerable to climate change. Second, they depend on renewable natural resources most at risk to climate variability and extremes for their economic activities and livelihoods. Third, they live in geographical regions and ecosystems that are most exposed to the impacts of climate change, while also sharing a complex cultural relationship with such ecosystems. Fourth, high levels of exposure and vulnerability to climate change force indigenous peoples to migrate, which in most cases is not a solution and can instead exacerbate social and economic vulnerabilities. Fifth, gender inequality, a key factor in the deprivation suffered by indigenous women, is magnified by climate change. Sixth, and lastly, many indigenous communities continue to face exclusion from decision-making processes, often lacking recognition and institutional support. This limits their access to remedies, increases their vulnerability to climate change, undermines their ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and consequently poses a threat to the advances made in securing their rights.

¹ See page 1 in R. Mearns and A. Norton: “Equity and vulnerability in a warming world: introduction and overview”, in R. Mearns and A. Norton (eds): *Social dimensions of climate change: equity and vulnerability in a warming world*, New Frontiers of Social Policy (Washington DC, World Bank, 2010), pp. 1–44.

3.1 Poverty and inequality

According to a recent World Bank study, climate change could push nearly 100 million people back into poverty by 2030,² posing a grave threat to the progress made in poverty alleviation over the past few decades and to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. The impacts of climate change, such as those due to natural disasters, could increase inequality and contribute to a further “decoupling of economic growth and poverty reduction”.³

The study notes that poor people and poor countries are exposed and vulnerable to all forms of climate-related shocks. For example, assets and livelihoods may be destroyed because of natural disasters; work capacity may be lost because of high or low temperatures; food-borne, water-borne and vector-borne diseases may spread under the impact of heatwaves, floods or droughts; crop failure may be caused by changing rainfall patterns; food prices may rise following extreme weather events; and violent conflict or population movements may be triggered by resource scarcity. The consequences of such events for inequality and for indigenous peoples’ poverty are particularly severe, as these peoples are already overrepresented among the



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² S. Hallegatte, M. Bangalore, L. Bonzanigo et al.: *Shock waves: managing the impacts of climate change on poverty*, Climate Change and Development Series (Washington DC, World Bank, 2016).

³ Ibid, p. 79.

poor: they account for nearly 15 per cent of the world's poor, even though they constitute an estimated 5 per cent of the world's population.⁴

Moreover, 70–80 per cent⁵ of the more than 370 million indigenous peoples⁶ worldwide are spread across Asia and the Pacific, a region particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.⁷ The World Bank⁸ estimates that, in East Asia and the Pacific, nearly 13 million people could fall into extreme poverty by 2030 because of climate change, and the lower crop yields and higher food prices that result from it. Such figures are particularly worrying given that, in Asia, the World Bank⁹ estimates that, with some exceptions, development indicators for indigenous peoples are already worse than the population averages.

While there is some evidence of declining poverty rates in the emerging economies of Asia, notably in China, India and Viet Nam, indigenous peoples continue to experience a wider poverty gap than non-indigenous peoples and one that is constantly widening. In Latin America, a region which will also be severely affected by climate change, World Bank research shows a persistence of poverty rates for indigenous peoples over time. The risks posed to poverty reduction by climate change are hence of particular significance to the well-being of indigenous peoples, who, even with declining poverty rates in some countries, remain the “poorest among the poor”.¹⁰

3.2 Erosion of natural resource-based livelihoods

The majority of indigenous peoples live in rural areas and depend on lands and natural resources for their livelihoods, employment and subsistence.¹¹ They play an important role in the rural economy and are engaged in a range of traditional occupations, such as agriculture, pastoralism, fishing, handicraft production, and hunting and gathering. Globally, some 70 million indigenous people are dependent on forests for their livelihoods.¹² Deforestation not only threatens their subsistence but contributes to around 10–12 per cent of global carbon emissions.¹³

At the same time, although indigenous peoples account for an estimated 5 per cent of the world's population, they care for and protect nearly 22 per cent of the Earth's surface and

⁴ World Bank: *Implementation of operational directive 4.20 on indigenous peoples: an independent desk review* (Washington DC, 2003).

⁵ 70 per cent is the figure provided by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and 80 per cent the figure provided by the World Bank. See *Rural Poverty Portal. Statistics and key facts about indigenous peoples*, Powered by IFAD, n.d., http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/topic/statistics/tags/indigenous_peoples [accessed 9 June 2016]. Also see World Bank: *Still among the poorest of the poor*, Indigenous Peoples country brief (Washington DC, 2011).

⁶ UN: *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (New York, 2009).

⁷ S. Hallegatte, M. Bangalore, L. Bonzanigo et al., op. cit.

⁸ World Bank: *Climate change threatens to deepen poverty in East Asia Pacific by 2030*, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/11/12/climate-change-threatens-to-deepen-poverty-in-east-asia-pacific-by-2030> [accessed 9 June 2016].

⁹ World Bank: *Still among the poorest of the poor*, Indigenous Peoples country brief (Washington DC, 2011).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See UN: *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (New York, 2009).

¹² See Goal 15: “Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss”, UN, n.d., <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/> [accessed 9 June 2016].

¹³ P. Smith, M. Bustamante, H. Ahammad et al.: “Agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU)”, in O. Edenhofer, R. Pichs-Madruga, Y. Sokona et al. (eds): *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 811–922.

80 per cent of the planet's remaining biodiversity.¹⁴ Most important, the relationship between indigenous peoples' livelihoods, lands and natural resources extends beyond the economic realm and is of particular significance to their cultures and ways of life. Climate change, however, and efforts to combat it that exclude indigenous peoples pose a grave threat to their livelihoods and endanger their distinct cultures. These factors also exacerbate the existing insecurity surrounding their livelihoods that stem from other social, economic and environmental issues, despite their importance as sustainable development actors.

Frequently lacking recognition of their rights to land, indigenous peoples face land alienation or restrictions to their access to natural resources or territories that they have traditionally occupied.¹⁵ This is mainly because of pressures for natural resource extraction and environmental degradation, and policies regarding environmental conservation that do not take into consideration indigenous peoples' needs.¹⁶ Moreover, for many indigenous women and men, traditional occupations no longer meet their livelihood needs, while their access to other forms of income generation is impeded by lack of training and skills, weak market linkages, discrimination in the formal and informal economy, limited access to credit, land insecurity, and low incentives for investment. These situations, along with inadequate access to social protection, mean that indigenous women and men increasingly face severe livelihoods insecurity and impoverishment in several parts of the world.¹⁷ Given these circumstances, climate change introduces another layer of threat and thus has significant implications for indigenous peoples in the world of work.

Multiple livelihood-related stressors in the Plurinational State of Bolivia

A 2012 case study of indigenous farmers in the Bolivian highlands found that the livelihoods of these farmers was increasingly likely to be imperilled because of the multiple stressors that accumulate with climate change. These include social and economic stressors such as land scarcity, uncertainties in agricultural and labour markets, institutional marginalization, and climate-related stressors such as water shortages, rising temperatures and increased climate variability. Owing to the changes being introduced by these multiple stressors, indigenous farmers were found to be losing their incomes and food security. The stressors simultaneously led to reduction in access, and demand for expenditure, of household assets for adaptation, including natural and human capital, alongside financial, physical and social capital.

"It has changed. Sometimes the rain does not fall in its season; sometimes the frost does not come right in its season. Before it was later, but now the frost arrives early, like a punishment. Now the rain falls like it is saying 'I am not going to come any more.' Already, the sun is very strong. Before, it was not like this." — Farmer from Palca.

Source: J.Z. McDowell and J.J. Hess: "Accessing adaptation: Multiple stressors on livelihoods in the Bolivian highlands under a changing climate", in *Global Environmental Change* (2012), vol. 22, No. 2, May, pp. 342–352.

¹⁴ World Bank: *Social dimensions of climate change: workshop report 2008* (Washington DC, 2008).

¹⁵ In Asia for instance, see R.K. Dhir: *Indigenous peoples in the world of work in Asia and the Pacific: a status report* (Geneva, ILO, 2015).

¹⁶ See UN: *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (New York, 2009).

¹⁷ For cases in Asia, see ILO: *Indigenous peoples in the world of work: snapshots from Asia* (Geneva, 2015).



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3.3 Residence in geographical areas exposed to climate change

The geographical regions and ecosystems that indigenous peoples tend to inhabit, such as polar regions, humid tropical forests, high mountains, small islands, coastal regions, and arid and semi-arid lands, are especially prone to the effects of climate change.¹⁸ The impacts on poor communities dependent on ecosystem-based livelihoods may be considerable, depleting their subsistence production and removing one of their safety nets.¹⁹ Agriculture, for example, on which many indigenous peoples depend for food security and for meeting their subsistence needs, is one of the sectors most sensitive to climate change.

Loss of ecosystems and changing weather patterns also have severe implications for indigenous peoples' cultures and ways of life, given that a number of such communities share a complex cultural relationship with their surroundings. For example, in the Arctic, a study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has noted that indigenous populations are uniquely vulnerable to climate change because of their close relationship with and dependence on the land, sea and natural resources for their cultural, social,

¹⁸ R. Mearns and A. Norton, op. cit., pp. 1–44.

¹⁹ S. Hallegatte, M. Bangalore, L. Bonzanigo et al., op. cit..

economic and physical well-being.²⁰ Similarly, a recent World Bank study²¹ on Latin America and the Caribbean found that changes in precipitation patterns and seasonal regimes disrupt the agricultural calendar; affect crop production and the availability of wild fruit and game; and increase the incidence of livestock diseases, with serious consequences for indigenous peoples' food security, health and cultural identity.

Indigenous peoples' livelihoods and cultures also face threats from climate mitigation and adaptation measures that exclude them. For instance, large-scale renewable energy projects and forest and biodiversity conservation projects on indigenous peoples' traditional lands and territories have been associated with land alienation and forced displacement, leading to loss of livelihoods and identity.²² The threat-multiplying characteristics of climate change combined with certain climate-related actions have become major obstacles which need to be surmounted in the efforts to secure livelihoods, cultures and well-being of indigenous peoples.



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²⁰ A.J. Parkinson: "Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Human Health in the Arctic", in UNESCO (eds): *Climate change and Arctic sustainable development: scientific, social, cultural and educational challenges* (Paris, UNESCO, 2009), pp.156–163.

²¹ J. Kronik and D. Verner: *Indigenous peoples and climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Directions in Development – Environment and Sustainable Development (Washington DC, World Bank, 2010).

²² See UN: *Impact of climate change mitigation measures on indigenous peoples and on their territories and lands*. Submitted by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Aqqaq Lyng, Forum members. (Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2008).

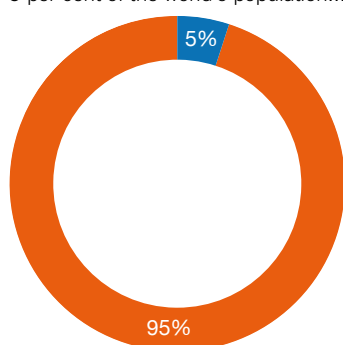
Indigenous peoples in the Pacific region

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has observed that rising sea levels around the world will have particular implications for the Pacific region, which includes small island developing States that contain within them the traditional lands and territories of many indigenous peoples. The very existence of many territories is under threat because of the rising sea levels caused by climate change. Other threats include soil erosion from destructive wave activity, frequent storm surges, and landslides that can result in loss of land for many indigenous groups.

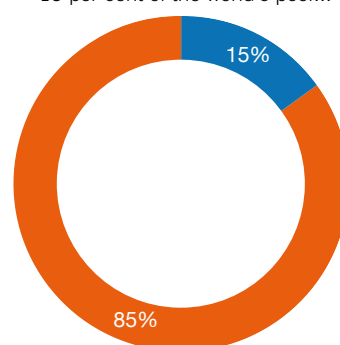
Being situated in the high-risk geographical areas, the indigenous peoples of the Pacific region face a grave risk not only to their livelihoods but also to their cultures and ways of life, as these are intrinsically connected to their traditional lands and territories. Such risks and the impacts of climate change are already being experienced across the region. For example, high tides and stormy seas have caused problems recently in the Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Tuvalu and low-lying islands of Papua New Guinea. Similarly, plantations and livestock, which are important means of subsistence for many indigenous groups, are now vulnerable to diseases and pests associated with flooding and other climate variations.

Source: *Fact Sheet: Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific Region*, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), n.d., http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday/pdf/factsheet_Pacific_FINAL.pdf [accessed 7 January 2016].

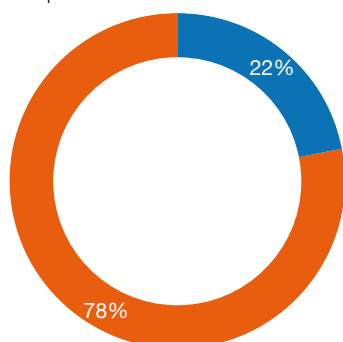
Indigenous peoples constitute about 5 per cent of the world's population...



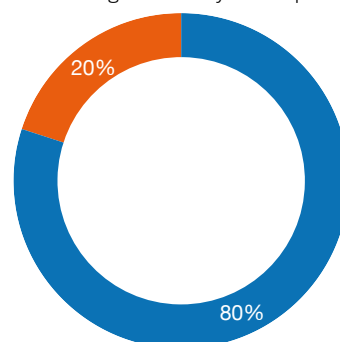
...but they account for nearly 15 per cent of the world's poor...



...yet they care for an estimated 22 per cent of the Earth's surface...



...and protect nearly 80 per cent of remaining biodiversity on the planet.



Sources: World Bank: *Implementation of operational directive 4.20 on indigenous peoples: An independent desk review* (Washington DC, 2003) and World Bank: *Social dimensions of climate change: workshop report 2008* (Washington DC, 2008).

3.4 Migration and forced displacement

Confronted with livelihood insecurity and inadequate levels of income from work in traditional occupations, many indigenous women and men have been migrating away from their traditional areas to both rural and urban areas, in search of work. Climate change-induced natural disasters and loss of livelihoods are expected further to increase such migration and forced relocation. In the Arctic, for instance, the IPCC²³ has observed that accelerated rates of change in permafrost thaw, loss of coastal ice, and sea level rise, and increased weather intensity are forcing some indigenous communities in Alaska to relocate.

While migration may be an adaptation strategy,²⁴ forced upon people by the impacts of climate change, it can also render indigenous women and men more vulnerable to discrimination, loss of identity, exploitation, and other social, economic and environmental risks in their destination areas, compared to other groups in society, including the poor. Failure to recognize their traditional skills, poor training and disregard for their cultures and ways of life are among the barriers that they face in securing decent work after migration. A recent ILO study measuring minimum wage compliance in ten developing economies found evidence that workers from indigenous communities are exposed to greater compliance gaps than other workers, with women within these groups facing compounded disadvantage.²⁵

Indigenous women and men also tend to have higher rates of unemployment in urban areas. For example, in India, which is home to a population of nearly 104 million indigenous peoples (referred to as “scheduled tribes”), the unemployment rate in urban areas for scheduled tribe males rose from 2.9 per cent in 2004–05 to 4.4 per cent in 2009–10; for scheduled tribe females, it rose from 3.4 per cent in 2004–05 to 4.3 per cent in 2009–10. The unemployment rate for all other social groups, however, has generally remained at the same level or declined over this period.²⁶

Many indigenous women and men find employment in the informal economy and engage in a range of activities such as casual and seasonal wage work on farms, plantations, construction sites in informal enterprises and street vending or as domestic workers. Work in such settings tends to be precarious or hazardous and is often marked by wage discrimination, limited social protection, weak contractual arrangements, and health and safety risks, along with forced labour situations.²⁷ It often entails working in indoor settings without climate control, or in outdoor settings such as farms and construction sites. Climate change is particularly significant in this context as variations in temperature can dramatically increase the risk of health problems and accidents, in addition to lowering the capacity to work, which in turn can push people into extreme poverty, especially where access to adequate social protection is lacking.

²³ J.N. Larsen, O.A. Anisimov, A. Constable et al.: “Polar regions”, in V.R. Barros, C.B. Field, D.J. Dokken et al. (eds), *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1567–1612.

²⁴ F. Gemenne and J. Blocher: *How can migration support adaptation? Different options to test the migration–adaptation nexus*, Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Working Paper Series No. 1 (Geneva, IOM, 2016).

²⁵ U. Rani, P. Belser, M. Oelz and S. Ranjbar: “Minimum wage coverage and compliance in developing countries”, in *International Labour Review* (2013) Vol. 152, No. 3–4.

²⁶ For more information on scheduled tribes and their employment situation in India, see R. K. Dhir, op. cit.

²⁷ Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues: *Indigenous peoples’ access to decent work and social protection* (2014).



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A recent study²⁸ has found that increases in heat levels at the workplace due to climate change in particular affect workers with the lowest incomes, including those engaged in heavy labour and low-skilled agricultural work. Excessive workplace heat and resulting high body temperatures and dehydration cause heat exhaustion, heat stroke and, in some instances, even death. Excessive heat also has implications for productivity, economic output, pay and family income, as workers' natural reaction is to slow down in their work or limit working hours.

The study suggests that under such circumstances, the loss of labour productivity will be the greatest in the Asia-Pacific region, and that this will not only affect workers but also have broader economic consequences. These findings are particularly significant where indigenous peoples are concerned, given that most of them are located in the Asia-Pacific region, vulnerable to social and economic risk factors, increasingly dependent on the informal economy and concentrated in work settings exposed to excessive heat.

Indigenous peoples who relocate to urban areas often live in slums that lack access to basic services and infrastructure.²⁹ In numerous urban centres, slums or informal settlements are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, in particular natural disasters.³⁰ At the same time, many indigenous communities find it difficult to cope in environments where they face discrimination due to their traditional practices and ways of life, leading to a loss of identity. For instance, East African indigenous peoples, who consist primarily of pastoralists and groups of hunters and gatherers, have faced numerous challenges in transitioning to urban life.³¹

²⁸ International Organization for Migration, United Nations Development Programme, Climate Vulnerable Forum, International Labour Organization, World Health Organization, UNI Global Union, International Organization of Employers and ACT Alliance: *Climate change and labour: impacts of heat in the workplace* (2016).

²⁹ UN-Habitat: *Urban indigenous peoples and migration: a review of policies, programmes and practices* (Nairobi, 2010).

³⁰ UN-Habitat: *Integrating climate change into city development strategies (CDS)* (Nairobi, 2015).

³¹ L.A. Young: "East Africa and the Horn", in P. Grant (eds) *State of the world's minorities and indigenous peoples 2015* (London, Minority Rights Group International, 2015), pp. 74–86.

Migration in the Andean region

Heavily dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, the indigenous peoples of the Andean region are extremely vulnerable to climate change, while they also experience social, political and economic marginalization. Research has highlighted that their livelihoods are increasingly endangered by water scarcity; the destruction of ecosystems and natural resources; changes in biodiversity; plant and livestock diseases; and crop losses. This has led to economic losses, loss of life, and food insecurity, both for the indigenous peoples themselves and for the populations that depend on the food produced in indigenous villages. These losses have resulted in migration to cities, where the new migrants have no choice but to live in poor and conflict-ridden neighbourhoods in peripheral areas. Due to the impact of climate change on their livelihoods, indigenous adults in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, for example, migrate temporarily to areas in the Yungas or to the cities of La Paz or El Alto to work as day labourers. Many of the young have already migrated, raising concern about the possibility of depopulation, and loss of traditional knowledge and identity.

“The young people have gone to La Paz, and most of the older people who remained as peasant farmers in the village have already died.” – 22 year old Francisca Quispe Flores from the Aymara community of El Chairo

Source: J. Kronik and D. Verner: *Indigenous peoples and climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Directions in Development – Environment and Sustainable Development (Washington DC, World Bank, 2010).

Climate-induced migration can also cause loss of traditional knowledge, with negative implications not only for indigenous peoples' cultures but also for climate action, as measures aimed at mitigation and adaptation need to draw on indigenous knowledge systems to be successful. The interconnections between climate change, migration and the informal economy thus highlight an important transformation that is occurring in indigenous peoples' world of work, which is increasingly vulnerable to multiple layers of threat that risk exacerbating impoverishment and the loss of traditional knowledge.

3.5 Gender inequality

Indigenous women and girls play a vital role in traditional and non-traditional livelihoods, unpaid care work, and ensuring food security. With increasing insecurity regarding their livelihoods however, many are seeking out employment in the informal economy and participating in activities ranging from agricultural wage work in rural areas to domestic work in urban areas.³² Furthermore, many indigenous women bear the burden of income generation, traditional activities and household-related work, simultaneously. While they make tremendous contributions to the social, economic and cultural life of communities and society at large, indigenous women often face discrimination from both within and outside their communities. As a result, they are vulnerable to social and economic exclusion, exploitation, marginalization and gender-based violence.³³ Climate change threatens to make indigenous women still more vulnerable to such

³² See, for example, D. Vinding and E. Kampbel: *Indigenous women workers: with case studies from Bangladesh, Nepal and the Americas* (Geneva, ILO, 2012). Also see ILO: *Estudio sobre la situación laboral de las mujeres indígenas en el Perú* (Lima, 2015) and ILO: *Indigenous peoples in the world of work: snapshots from Asia* (Geneva, 2015).

³³ For instance in Nepal, women and girls from indigenous communities, along with Dalit women, are reported to constitute 80 per cent of the trafficking victims in the country. See *Seven out of every ten victims of trafficking in person are indigenous women and girls in Nepal*, D.K. Sunuwar, 2015, <http://www.indigenousvoice.com/en/7-out-of-every-10-victims-of-trafficking-in-person-are-indigenous-women-and-girls-in-nepal.html> [accessed 9 June 2016]. Also see United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), ILO, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (OSRSG/VAC): *Breaking the silence on violence against indigenous girls, adolescents and young women: a call to action based on an overview of existing evidence from Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America* (2013).



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processes, besides creating new risks from climate-related shocks that include greater dependence on precarious work, and also exposure to violence and human rights violations.

Compared to both the non-indigenous population and indigenous men, indigenous women are more vulnerable to social and economic risks after they have migrated to urban or other areas. These risks include exposure to violence, limited access to social services, discrimination, and concentration in occupations or sectors prone to precarious working conditions and labour rights violations.³⁴ For example, in many countries, domestic workers are primarily women from particular socially disadvantaged groups, including indigenous peoples.³⁵

Similarly, loss of identity as a result of climate-induced migration, and the risks associated with living in slums or informal settlements affect indigenous women in different ways when compared to their male counterparts. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has warned that, while women, and especially poor women, are more likely to suffer injury or death when a natural disaster occurs, they are often excluded from planning processes and discussions on climate change.³⁶ Given that discriminatory practices lead to the segregation of certain groups into high-risk neighbourhoods, and that indigenous peoples in particular are often excluded from decision-making, education, healthcare and information regarding assistance and relief programmes,³⁷ the vulnerability of indigenous women to the slightest of shocks is greatly magnified.

³⁴ See page 60 in Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): *Guaranteeing indigenous peoples' rights in Latin America: progress in the past decade and remaining challenges (summary)* (Santiago, Chile, 2014).

³⁵ M. Oelz and U. Rani: *Domestic work, wages, and gender equality: lessons from developing countries*, Research Department Working Paper No. 7 (Geneva, ILO, 2015).

³⁶ UN-Habitat: *Cities and climate change: global report on human settlements 2011*, Global Report on Human Settlements (London and Washington DC, Earthscan, 2011).

³⁷ Ibid.

Indigenous women in South Cameroon

Research on Baka women, who are members of the Pygmy community of nomadic hunter-gatherers, has found that the economic and cultural life of these women is under threat because of intense logging that is damaging to the environment on which the women depend, and because of the impacts of climate change. It was observed that seasonal variations such as exceedingly high temperatures, the drying up of springs and wetlands, and decreasing stream and river volume are having a negative impact on livelihoods and food security. For instance, in the village of Andoo'o, women pointed out that a hectare of farm land that used to produce as much as 25–30 jute bags of groundnuts was now able to produce only 10 such bags because of changing weather patterns.

The Baka women have an exceptionally close relationship with the forest, especially in respect of basic household needs, medicinal products, shelter and food, for the handing down of traditional norms and practices, and as a venue for communion with the ancestors. Because forests and natural resources are increasingly under threat, women are having to adapt to semi-sedentary ways of life, and at the same time face the difficult situation of having little with which to feed their families.

Source: Lelewal: "Indigenous women and climate change in South Cameroon", in Tebtebba Foundation (eds): *Indigenous women, climate change and forests* (Baguio City, 2011), pp. 75–92.

While a greater number of indigenous women tend to be victims of disaster and emergency situations,³⁸ climate change also plays a major role in enhancing their daily workload and exposure to violence. For instance, water scarcity has implications for indigenous women as they bear primary responsibility for household-related activities. In their search for water, many are forced to walk large distances, which not only considerably increases their daily workload, but also leaves them vulnerable to sexual violence in areas distant from their villages.³⁹ Furthermore, exposure to varying temperatures, such as heat increases, can lead to health risks and lower their capacity to work,⁴⁰ even when performing household-related activities and childcare. The intersectional dynamics of indigenous women's world of work and the threats stemming from the impacts both of climate change and of exclusionary climate action thus pose a fundamental challenge to the achievement of gender equality.

3.6 Lack of recognition, rights, institutional support and inclusion in public policies

It is important to examine the issue of indigenous peoples and climate change from a human rights perspective, given that, at the international level, the rights of indigenous peoples have been recognized and the links between climate change and human rights have been clearly established.⁴¹ In this context, it is necessary to look both at substantive rights, such as rights to lands, territories and natural resources, and enabling rights, such as rights to access to timely information, to consultation, participation and remedy. The state of the environment

³⁸ O. Gonzalo and F. Annelie: *Indigenous peoples and climate change*, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union (Brussels, European Parliament, 2009).

³⁹ J. Carling, J. Carino and L.N. Sherpa: *Asia Report on Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples* (Chiang Mai, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, 2015).

⁴⁰ International Organization for Migration, United Nations Development Programme, Climate Vulnerable Forum, International Labour Organization, World Health Organization, UNI Global Union, International Organization of Employers and ACT Alliance, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ UN Human Rights Council: *Resolution 10/4. Human rights and climate change* (Human Rights Council, 2009).



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conditions the enjoyment of human rights. As climate change exacerbates the existing social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities of indigenous peoples and creates numerous new threats, its impacts have particular consequences for the exercise of their rights,⁴² since these rights are not adequately secured and protected, and access to remedies is often lacking.

The explicit recognition of indigenous or tribal peoples, and of their rights, remains absent from the legal, policy and institutional frameworks of many countries and from their practice. There are exceptions, however; in Latin America, for instance, 14 countries have ratified Convention No. 169, while in Bangladesh and India, special legal provisions have been adopted for the protection of certain tribal groups.⁴³ Even in those countries, while some progress has been made towards securing the rights of the peoples concerned, implementation remains a major issue. In other countries, the absence of recognition of indigenous peoples has had severe repercussions for the protection of their rights, which in turn is crucial for tackling structural problems that perpetuate their social and economic exclusion and marginalization.⁴⁴

⁴² See press release by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples on this issue: “UN Special Rapporteur: Indigenous Peoples’ rights must be respected in global climate change agreement”, anon, n.d., <http://unsr.vtauli-corpuz.org/site/index.php/press-releases/61-clima-change-hrc> [accessed 9 June 2016].

⁴³ See R.K. Dhir, op. cit.

⁴⁴ For instance in Asia, see *ibid*.



In a majority of cases, irrespective of whether or not indigenous peoples are recognized, procedures for consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making are weak or absent, even though both the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Convention No. 169 call for them to be established. Moreover, in most countries, support for indigenous peoples' own institutions tends to be missing or suffers from poor implementation. Indigenous peoples, therefore, often find themselves in a situation where they are unable to express their priorities for development as it affects them.

In the context of climate change, where the mechanisms for the participation of and consultation with indigenous peoples are scarce and weak, there are a number of negative consequences. Measures aimed at mitigation and adaptation risk being unsuccessful without the meaningful participation of indigenous groups, and can also cause harm to communities. For example, renewable energy projects that contribute to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions but are carried out without the participation of or consultation with the indigenous peoples who may be affected by them, risk exacerbating negative impacts such as land alienation and livelihood insecurity. This undermines indigenous peoples' institutions, traditions and ways of life, which are fundamental to the success of efforts to address climate change. At the same time, indigenous peoples' own capacities to respond to climate vulnerabilities are greatly undermined without adequate protection of their rights. Such a situation, in turn, considerably enhances the threats to their well-being posed by the impacts of climate change and, without strong mechanisms to ensure access to remedies,⁴⁵ can significantly undermine any achievements made towards securing their rights.

The voice of indigenous peoples is crucial when it comes to reconciling diverse interests and moving towards greater policy coherence. This is particularly the case where development interventions increasingly have to attain intrinsically linked objectives related to economic growth, poverty reduction, sustainable development and climate change.

Indigenous peoples have suffered historical injustices and are among those who have contributed the least to climate change – yet they endure its negative consequences disproportionately. They are threatened by both the direct impacts of climate change and the factors that cause it. This raises serious concerns regarding climate justice, fairness and equity, particularly with regard to meaningful participation in the efforts made to combat climate change, ensuring that indigenous peoples are the primary beneficiaries of such efforts.⁴⁶

It is all too often the case that, at the international and national levels, meaningful participation by indigenous peoples in shaping climate action is limited.⁴⁷ Their exclusion from the development and implementation of public policies aimed at mitigating, and adapting to, climate change can have serious negative impacts on the enjoyment of their rights, on their interests and on their

⁴⁵ See OHCHR: *Key messages on human rights and climate change*, n.d., http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/KeyMessages_on_HR_CC.pdf [accessed 1 July 2016].

⁴⁶ For more details on climate justice, see Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): *Understanding human rights and climate change: submission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, OHCHR, 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/COP21.pdf> [accessed 9 June 2016].

⁴⁷ See Reuters: "Indigenous peoples ignored in climate plans, seek voice at UN talks", 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/climatechange-summit-indigenous-idUSL8N13D0FM20151118> [accessed 9 June 2016].

well-being.⁴⁸ For instance, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has stressed that, if the REDD processes are not carefully designed and implemented through a rights-based approach, “they risk violating their [indigenous peoples’] rights and can increase their socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities”.⁴⁹ This suggests that, while moving forward, it is crucial to employ a rights-based approach that ensures the meaningful participation of indigenous peoples at all levels of decision-making, and provides for strong mechanisms to secure their access to remedies. Such an approach would help tackle the threats that they face and effectively combat climate change with indigenous peoples as partners and crucial agents of change.

“Indigenous peoples, ignored in climate plans, seek voice at UN talks” – Reuters, 2015

“The role of the world’s more than 370 million indigenous peoples in fighting climate change has been largely ignored in national plans to curb planet-warming emissions issued ahead of upcoming UN climate talks, researchers and activists said on Wednesday.”

“The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) found only a handful of governments included indigenous land and forest management as part of their climate strategies submitted to the United Nations in the run-up to negotiations in Paris to thrash out a new deal to limit global warming ... A growing body of research shows that recognizing indigenous peoples’ rights is key in combating climate change, yet their role in preventing deforestation and land degradation continues to be a blind spot on the climate agenda, experts say. Deforestation rates are significantly lower in areas where national governments formally recognize and protect the forest rights of indigenous peoples, according to a 2014 study by the RRI and the World Resources Institute.”

For the full story, see: <http://www.reuters.com/article/climatechange-summit-indigenous-idUSL8N13D0FM20151118>

⁴⁸ For more details on human rights implications of climate change, see United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): *Climate change and human rights* (Nairobi, 2015).

⁴⁹ IUCN: *Indigenous peoples and REDD-plus: challenges and opportunities for the engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities in REDD-plus*, IUCN, 2010, http://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/import/downloads/iucn_briefing_ips_and_redd_aug_2010_summary.pdf [accessed 9 June 2016].



4. What makes indigenous peoples agents of change?

Indigenous peoples are not just “victims” or “subjects of development”;¹ they are fundamental partners and crucial agents of change for achieving effective climate action, sustainable development and green growth.

The present report identifies two principal characteristics which make them key agents of change for climate mitigation and adaptation: their wealth creation based on principles of a sustainable green economy and their unique knowledge.

4.1 Economy based on principles of sustainability

Indigenous peoples’ economies primarily depend on natural resources and ecosystems. Their core productive asset is natural capital, which they use in a productive and sustainable manner. They also share a complex cultural relationship with their surroundings and ecosystems, which they value for more than the mere economic gains. Their economic activities predominantly consist of agroforestry, agriculture or the use of forest products and other natural resources for their income and living. These include the sustainable harvesting of fish, bush meat, fruit, mushrooms, medicines, roots, and other productive materials for construction or handicrafts. The economies of indigenous peoples around the world are governed by an economic model which ensures that their natural capital is sustainably managed. Although their habitats and ways of living are highly distinctive and differ widely one from another, they nevertheless share the same sustainable way of wealth creation.

For example,² under the indigenous management systems of the Qashqai nomadic pastoralists in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the cutting of living trees, other than in extreme need, is prohibited and considered a sin. The sustainable use of non-timber products such as gums, medicinal and veterinary plants, vegetable dyes, mushrooms and other edible herbs and fruit, forms the basis of their economy. Over the centuries, the sustainable hunting practices of the Qashqai have helped to ensure the preservation of wildlife. The capturing and storage of water in drylands and maintenance of springs and waterholes for their livestock have now become climate adaptation strategies. The Qashqai employ sophisticated scouting and early warning systems that enable them to predict droughts, take preventive measures and adopt coping strategies. Over time, the Qashqai have developed irreplaceable techniques of habitat management and rangeland rehabilitation for maintaining the diversity of bioecological systems. Qashqai pastoralists know the names and properties of every botanical species in their rangelands. They can provide comprehensive

¹ Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: “Suggestions for the high level political forum’s consideration to ensure that indigenous peoples are not left behind in the 2030 Agenda”, 2016, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=198&menu=3170> [accessed 10 June 2016].

² For more information on these examples, see FAO: *Climate smart agriculture: sourcebook* (Rome, 2013).



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descriptions of their value for medicine, food, feed and manufacturing, and their place in the ecosystem, and this knowledge is highly regarded and increasingly sought after by international crop and food companies.

In the case of the Bantu tribes in southern Africa, for example, forest clearance and agricultural practices on sloped land were prohibited because of the risk of soil erosion. The pruning of trees was only allowed during specific periods in the year, which in turn enabled the trees to maximize their yields. Smoking in the forest was strictly forbidden to prevent forest fires. The reason for these strict rules was that the income of these peoples depended on the sustainable management of the natural assets. Once the forest or fertile soil is lost because of fires or erosion, indigenous peoples risk losing their livelihoods. These two examples are illustrative of the manner in which 370 million people, approximately the size of the US population, are at the vanguard of running a modern economic model based on principles of a sustainable and green economy.

Moreover, related studies which looked at the sources of income of the absolute poor, the demographic group to which most indigenous peoples belong, have found that natural resources provide the bulk of their incomes. Calculations of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the poor reveal that, in Indonesia, natural resources and ecosystem services made up 75 per cent of income of the poor, in Brazil, 89 per cent and, in India, 47 per cent. Yet, when the value of natural resources as a proportion of total GDP for the entire population of these countries was calculated, natural assets accounted for only 11 per cent, 6 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.³

In practice and for climate change mitigation, such cases and figures highlight how indigenous peoples are already minimizing emissions from deforestation, while simultaneously sharing a sustainable and productive relationship with their natural resources. A recent World Resources

³ TEEB: *Mainstreaming the economics of nature: a synthesis of the approach, conclusions and recommendations of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (2010).

Institute⁴ study also found that the granting of legal forest rights to indigenous communities, and the government protection of those rights, tend to lower both carbon dioxide emissions and deforestation, while also empowering communities. Thus, in Brazil, from 2000 to 2012, deforestation in indigenous community forests was less than 1 per cent, compared with 7 per cent outside these areas. The higher deforestation rate observed outside indigenous community forests led to 27 times more carbon dioxide emissions.

The study also found that indigenous community forests contain 36 per cent more carbon per hectare, compared with other areas of the Brazilian Amazon. In Honduras, forest loss was 140 times lower in community-led forest initiatives. A World Bank study on Latin America has similarly stressed that indigenous peoples can make important contributions to climate mitigation, by acting as stewards of natural resources and biodiversity in the territories in which they live, provided that their rights are recognized and respected.⁵ Given that agriculture, forestry and other land-use account for some one fourth of net anthropogenic greenhouse-gas emissions (mainly from deforestation, agricultural emissions from soil and nutrient management and livestock),⁶ indigenous peoples, who take care of an estimated 22 per cent of the Earth's surface,⁷ play a highly relevant role in climate mitigation.



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⁴ C. Stevens, R. Winterbottom, K. Reytar et al.: *Securing rights, combating climate change: how strengthening community forest rights mitigates climate change* (Washington DC, World Resources Institute, 2014).

⁵ See page 130 in J. Kronik and D. Verner: *Indigenous peoples and climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Directions in Development – Environment and Sustainable Development (Washington DC, World Bank, 2010).

⁶ IPCC: “Summary for policymakers”, in O. Edenhofer, R. Pichs-Madruga, Y. Sokona et al. (eds): *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁷ World Bank: *Social dimensions of climate change: workshop report 2008* (Washington DC, 2008).

Traditional forest management by ethnic minority women in Viet Nam

The formulation and implementation of community regulations by Binh Son villagers, grounded in traditional knowledge, have led to positive outcomes in managing forests. Women are the main workers in the villages, performing agricultural and household-related activities, and engaging in the collection of firewood and non-timber forest products. They also play a key role in the management of forest resources, given that they interact with the forest more than any other group. While there are no written regulations regarding the use of forest produce, the villagers tend to use forest products primarily for domestic rather than commercial purposes. Meanwhile, community regulations restrict agricultural activities in several parts of the forest, forbid the cutting down of specific trees, and allow villagers to use only low-quality wood or dry branches. Violations of the regulations agreed upon by the community can incur penalties, which serve as an important deterrent. As women have equal rights regarding the formulation, implementation and monitoring of regulations governing forests in their community, they participate actively in the whole process and tend to protect their source of income and livelihoods more than men. In this way they play an important role in discovering, reporting and preventing illegal forest activities.

Source: V.T. Hien et al.: "Ethnic minority women in traditional forest management at Binh Son Village, Thai Nguyen Province, Vietnam", in Tebtebba Foundation (eds): *Indigenous women, climate change and forests* (Baguio City, 2011), pp. 247–266.

Route to sustainable fisheries

A study looking at fisheries in Canada and the Philippines found that, when indigenous peoples secure control over and access to their territories and natural resources, and possess managerial decision-making capabilities where these are concerned, there are positive implications for livelihoods and conservation. Securing rights builds resilience within indigenous communities, whereas the violation of their access rights, in particular where the communities are dependent on fishing, can have serious consequences for their social, cultural and economic life. The study emphasizes that, in a co-management arrangement, "indigenous peoples as an institution have the local ecological knowledge and values which the State should recognize as being the repositories of generations of observations that could contribute towards their cultural survival and sustainability of resources."

Source: R.C.G. Capistrano: *Indigenous peoples, their livelihoods and fishery rights in Canada and the Philippines: Paradoxes, perspectives and lessons learned*, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs (New York, United Nations, 2010).

4.2 Unique knowledge and skills

In its Fifth Assessment Report, IPCC states: "Indigenous, local, and traditional forms of knowledge are a major resource for adapting to climate change ... Natural resource dependent communities, including indigenous peoples, have a long history of adapting to highly variable and changing social and ecological conditions. But the salience of indigenous, local, and traditional knowledge will be challenged by climate change impacts. Such forms of knowledge are often neglected in policy and research, and their mutual recognition and integration with scientific knowledge will increase the effectiveness of adaptation."⁸

⁸ See page 758 in W.N. Adger, J.M. Pulhin, J. Barnett et al.: "Human security", in C.B. Field, V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken et al. (eds): *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 775–791.

Managing genetic biodiversity for climate change adaptation

In the Andes in Peru, a unique 12,000-hectare potato reserve has been established to conserve the region's potato biodiversity. The objective of the initiative is to remedy the increasing difficulty of producing potatoes, as warming climates have altered the growing patterns of some of the area's local varieties. The reserve is home to six indigenous Quechua communities, whose 8,000 residents own the land and control access to local resources, but manage their communal lands jointly for their collective benefit. In the potato reserve, which is located within a microcentre of origin for potatoes, a typical family farm grows between 20 and 80 varieties. Most of these varieties are grown for local consumption or regional barter.

As the climate becomes warmer, local potato farmers are experimenting with different varieties at higher altitudes where temperatures are lower. The farmers are using many varieties that had disappeared from their fields but that had been conserved in the gene bank of the International Potato Center. The Benefit-sharing Fund of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is working with the local farmers to repatriate varieties from the gene bank into their fields. More than 1,345 varieties can be found in the potato reserve: 779 were collected locally; 410 were repatriated from the International Potato Center; and 157 were received through seed exchanges. The fact that these varieties were disease-free helped increase yields. The popularity of the older potato varieties increased thanks to marketing efforts and the increased attention that these varieties received. The successful combination of traditional knowledge and modern technology, as evident in this case, underlines the unique role that indigenous peoples play in modern approaches for adapting to climate change.

Source: *Best practices – the Peruvian Potato Park*, Farmers' Rights, 2013, http://www.farmersrights.org/bestpractices/success_benefit-sharing_7.html [accessed: 15 August 2016].

Indigenous peoples' knowledge and cultural approaches to interacting with ecosystems as well as natural resources are unique, and of high relevance and value for climate change adaptation. For example, climate-smart agriculture, as promoted by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), incorporates a combination of traditional and modern techniques based on genetic databanks, set up by private and public initiatives, which benefit from and are often dependent on indigenous knowledge. Climate-smart agriculture is one of the most widely promoted techniques aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change, as it has proven to be so highly effective in this regard.⁹

A growing body of research suggests that indigenous peoples have a long record of adapting to climate variability, drawing on their traditional knowledge, which enhances their resilience. A study by IUCN¹⁰ has identified a number of traditional and innovative adaptive practices, including shoreline reinforcement; improved building technologies; increased water quality testing; rainwater harvesting; supplementary irrigation; traditional farming techniques to protect watersheds; changing hunting and gathering habits and periods; crop and livelihood diversification; the use of new materials; and community-based disaster-risk reduction. Similarly, several indigenous crop varieties and agricultural practices have been found to present advantages in terms of drought, pest and flood tolerance. For instance, communities in the Mekong Delta have been observed to sow sun rice (a wild rice variety) on land that is frequently flooded.¹¹

⁹ FAO: *Climate Smart Agriculture: Sourcebook* (Rome, 2013).

¹⁰ M. Macchi, G. Oviedo, S. Gotheil et al.: *Indigenous and traditional peoples and climate change: Issues paper* (IUCN, 2008).

¹¹ Regarding indigenous crop varieties and other adaptation techniques, see J. Carling, J. Carino and L.N. Sherpa: *Asia report on climate change and indigenous peoples* (Chiang Mai, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, 2015).



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Traditional knowledge that has saved lives

In 2004, before the Indian Ocean tsunami struck, the water on the shores of Yan Chiak, Myanmar suddenly drew back, a sign that was recognized by the Moken, a nomadic group that navigate the waters of southern Thailand and Myanmar. The entire village moved to higher ground, thereby saving many lives when the disaster struck. The UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia commented that the fact that the Moken survived, while many others did not, points to certain lessons to be learned from traditional, indigenous knowledge. Meanwhile, it was found that traditional materials, such as bamboo and thatch, used for housing construction close to the sea based on traditional norms, would not kill the occupants if it were to collapse. Similarly, making use of their traditional knowledge, Indonesia's Simeulue community saved tens of thousands of lives during the tsunami, as the community of some 80,500 people moved away from the shore to nearby hills. This community was awarded the prestigious United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction, for their efficient response.

Source: D. Elias et al.: "The knowledge that saved the sea gypsies", in *A World of Science* (UNESCO, 2005), Vol. 3, No. 2, April-June, pp. 20–23. See also *Leaders of Indonesia's Simeulue community receive a prestigious UN award*, UNISDR, 2005, <https://www.unisdr.org/archive/5602> [accessed 1 July 2016].

With a wealth of traditional knowledge and practices, indigenous peoples have an instrumental role to play in achieving the following goals. Without their meaningful participation, knowledge and practices, effective climate action and sustainable development cannot be achieved:

- Ensuring biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of natural resources such as forests or marine resources
- Enhancing sustainable agricultural practices and food security
- Enhancing sustainable livelihoods, creating green jobs and spurring climate-sensitive innovation, entrepreneurship and businesses
- Achieving gender equality and facilitating the increased participation of women in decision-making and natural resource management, among other areas
- Raising productivity and economic growth while taking into account environmental considerations
- Securing peaceful, stable and resilient societies necessary for inclusive social and economic development
- Establishing strong mechanisms for monitoring and accountability to ensure that no one is left behind

This knowledge is fundamental to the maintenance and development of successful measures for the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

Critically, the living space, biodiversity conservation, land and forest management, traditional knowledge, livelihood strategies, occupations¹² and ways of life of indigenous peoples generate synergies between measures aimed at climate mitigation and adaptation. In terms of climate language, additional co-benefits are also generated. As outlined above, the knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples are already leading the way in sustainable agriculture and forestry, protecting ecosystems for carbon storage, and providing other ecosystem services¹³ which are fundamental for combating climate change, reducing emissions from deforestation and land degradation and also key for adaptation to climate change. Co-benefits include enhanced livelihood security and green growth.



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¹² For more information regarding occupations of indigenous peoples, see ILO: *Traditional occupations of indigenous and tribal peoples – emerging trends* (Geneva, 2000).

¹³ See *Oral statement of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli Corpuz, Human Rights Council, twenty eighth session*, Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, 2015, <http://unsr.vtaulicorpuz.org/site/index.php/statements/63-panel-hrc-cc> [accessed 10 June 2016].



5. How can indigenous peoples be empowered to become agents of change?

While evidence clearly suggests that indigenous peoples need to play a fundamental role for climate action to be successful, a number of obstacles continue to prevent them from realizing their full potential. Tackling these obstacles is an important first step towards achieving a just transition, attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and tackling the threats of climate change. The necessary actions are outlined in the following sections.

5.1 Social protection, sustainable enterprise creation and livelihoods generation targeted at indigenous peoples with a view to simultaneously tackling poverty and environmental degradation

The vulnerability of indigenous peoples to social, economic and environmental shocks can be significantly reduced both by including indigenous peoples in general social protection schemes and by conducting more targeted programmes. Payment for specially targeted environmental services programmes¹ can contribute to the mitigation and adaptation of climate change. Effective social protection coverage can enable communities to take more risks and invest in their own productive capacity, giving them the potential to enhance innovation and entrepreneurship, both of which are crucial prerequisites for green growth.

A recent ILO study² explored how social protection and environmental sustainability objectives may be combined into one programme based on the premise that there are strong links between poverty, social protection and the environment. Social protection schemes that combine environmental and social objectives within a participatory framework for natural resource management can play a major role in strengthening indigenous peoples' rights and achieving strong environmental outcomes. Such schemes also create the security that people need in order to take risks and invest in their own productive capacity, and can thus contribute towards spurring innovation and entrepreneurship grounded in traditional knowledge and practices. Brazil's Bolsa Verde ("Green Grant") programme is a case in point; it combines an existing social protection programme (Bolsa Família – "Family Grant") with the payment for environmental services approach. The programme aims to reduce extreme poverty, while at the same time conserving forest cover. Eligible families receive 300 Brazilian reais every three months

¹ More information on Payment for Environmental Services Programmes available at: <http://www.social-protection.org>

² H. Schwarzer, C.V. Panhuys and K. Diekmann: *Protecting people and the environment: Lessons learnt from Brazil's Bolsa Verde, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, South Africa and 56 other experiences* (Geneva, ILO, ESS Working Paper No. 55, 2016).



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for an initial period of up to two years and agree to engage in sustainable activities to protect natural resources.

Social protection schemes such as Bolsa Verde require training in sustainable development and forest management. This could be further developed to promote decent work and green jobs opportunities, which in turn are crucial for developing and maintaining indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and livelihood strategies, and improving their working conditions.

The development of sustainable enterprises and the generation of livelihoods are also vital for enhancing decent work opportunities for indigenous peoples and harnessing their potential as agents of change. For example, cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations among indigenous peoples have been shown to improve environmental conservation based on traditional knowledge alongside promoting innovation, providing a sustainable source of income and livelihoods, and enhancing their capacity to defend their rights.³ Consequently, facilitating skills development and training to increase income generation capacities, with a particular focus on supporting economic activities of indigenous women and youth, including through improved market linkages; supporting innovation; building sustainable enterprises, including cooperatives; and creating green jobs based on traditional knowledge, is vital for escaping poverty, and for green growth.

³ For more information, see ILO: *Securing rights, creating jobs and ensuring sustainability: A cooperative way for empowering indigenous peoples*, Cooperatives and the World of Work No. 5 (Geneva, 2016).

5.2 Recognizing rights, promoting gender equality and building institutions

The ratification and effective implementation of Convention No. 169 represent key steps towards ensuring that indigenous peoples' rights are promoted, secured, respected and protected. For countries that have ratified the Convention, it constitutes a legally binding benchmark monitored by the ILO, and complements the Paris Agreement.⁴ The UN General Assembly, in the outcome document of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, encourages further ratifications of the Convention.⁵ As noted in the preface to the ILO handbook on Convention No. 169, "[i]ndigenous and tribal peoples' rights and concerns have gained unprecedented momentum, intersecting with the global debate concerning human rights, governance, poverty reduction and economic development, social economy, climate change, sustainable development and environmental protection".⁶

Securing the rights of indigenous peoples is dependent on strong mechanisms for consultation and participation, to ensure meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making, including with regard to national development plans and climate action. This also entails developing, with the participation of indigenous peoples, including indigenous women and youth, public policies that aim to address their particular social and economic vulnerabilities and create opportunities for them to pursue their own development priorities. Creating effective national mechanisms for consultation is crucial. Article 6(1) of Convention No. 169 calls for the consultation of indigenous peoples through appropriate procedures, and in particular through their representative institutions, whenever consideration is being given to legislative or administrative measures which may affect them directly. In addition, Article 6(2) provides that, "[t]he consultations carried out in application of this Convention shall be undertaken, in good faith and in a form appropriate to the circumstances, with the objective of achieving agreement or consent to the proposed measures".⁷

The ILO supervisory bodies, which are mandated to assess compliance with the Convention by ratifying States, have frequently pointed to the insufficient application of these provisions. A recent ILO study, which looks at these issues from an employers' perspective, has made several recommendations in this regard, including, among others, ensuring resources for implementing consultations; launching permanent dialogue spaces between the States and indigenous peoples; recognizing, respecting and promoting the strengthening of indigenous peoples' organizations; and promoting training and dissemination of Convention No. 169.⁸ Moving forward, indigenous peoples' organizations, governments, trade unions and employers' organizations

⁴ For more information on the ILO bodies and mechanisms, see ILO: *Rules of the game: A brief introduction to International Labour Standards* (Geneva, 2014).

⁵ For more information, see UN; *The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples*, UN, 2014, <http://www.un.org/en/ga/69/meetings/indigenous/#&panel1-1> [accessed 10 June 2016].

⁶ See page xii in ILO: *Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Handbook for ILO Tripartite Constituents*, International Labour Standards Department (Geneva, 2013).

⁷ For more information on the requirement regarding consultations in accordance with the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), see ILO: *Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Handbook for ILO Tripartite Constituents*, International Labour Standards Department (Geneva, 2013).

⁸ OIT: *Convenio núm. 169 de la OIT sobre Pueblos Indígenas y Tribales en Países Independientes y la consulta previa a los pueblos indígenas en proyectos de inversión. Reporte regional: Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Chile* (Lima, Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe, 2016). For information in English see: http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_507952/lang--en/index.htm.



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have a significant role to play in strengthening dialogue for the development of solutions, and in their effective implementation.

Critically, the participation of indigenous women in decision making is key to overcoming gender inequality and discrimination against them. Indigenous women play an important role in securing livelihoods and incomes, and greater visibility must be given to their labour situation and their economic contributions. An ILO study in Peru found that access to finance and technical assistance is particularly challenging for indigenous women, creating barriers to their efforts to develop enterprises, link to markets, and engage in activities such as trading and manufacturing of artisanal goods.⁹

Similarly, the study also found that indigenous women are at a disadvantage compared to men in terms of the community's economic decisions. For instance, they tend to receive less ploughing time for their land. Efforts to close such gaps that limit the participation of indigenous women in decision-making across all levels and to enhance their access to opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and income generation are critical for the empowerment of indigenous women, who play a significant role in sectors such as agriculture and forestry. Indigenous women's economic, social and political voice and contributions, are vital for climate action to be meaningful and development to be sustainable.

⁹ ILO: *The labour situation of indigenous women in Peru: a study* (Geneva, ILO, 2016).

5.3. Coordination and collaboration across policy areas and intervention levels grounded in evidence-based research

Policy coordination is essential to address the magnitude of the threats posed by climate change. This entails greater engagement across policies and regimes regarding the climate, development, and labour and human rights standards, including increased coordination among national authorities with responsibility in these various areas. Collaboration across international, national, regional and local levels is also vital for the design and implementation of strong climate action, with REDD+ playing a key role, which is particularly relevant for indigenous peoples.

For informed decision-making, the production of knowledge is among the first steps necessary for an understanding both of the nuances and of the full scale and scope of indigenous peoples' vulnerability to climate change. The collection and availability of disaggregated data are key components of this knowledge production. At the same time, a better understanding of the transformations under way in indigenous peoples' world of work, including with regard to their occupations and livelihoods, and their implications for the future of work, is critical for designing sound policies and interventions.

Furthermore, scientific research into the traditional knowledge, occupations, strategies and ways of life of indigenous peoples is extremely limited, and requires specific attention by bringing together knowledge systems. The production of knowledge by engaging both modern and traditional knowledge systems is of vital importance for the design of strategies for the effective mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.



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Key recent international commitments regarding climate change and indigenous peoples' rights

[Emphasis added by authors]

Paris Agreement (2015)

Preamble

*Taking into account the imperatives of **a just transition** of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities,*

*Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the **rights of indigenous peoples**, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity [...]*

Article 7.5

*Parties acknowledge that adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, **knowledge of indigenous peoples** and local knowledge systems, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate.*

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Target 2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, **indigenous peoples**, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, **indigenous peoples** and children in vulnerable situations.

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Target 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

Target 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

Target 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

Target 13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible.

Target 13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (2014)

26. We recognize the importance of the role that indigenous peoples can play in economic, social and environmental development through traditional sustainable agricultural practices, including traditional seed supply systems, and access to credit and other financial services, markets, secure land tenure, health care, social services, education, training, knowledge and appropriate and affordable technologies, including for irrigation, and water harvesting and storage.

36. We confirm that indigenous peoples' knowledge and strategies to sustain their environment should be respected and taken into account when we develop national and international approaches to **climate change mitigation and adaptation**.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

I. Preamble

7. [...] While recognizing their leading, regulatory and coordination role, Governments should engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, **indigenous peoples**, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards [...]

IV. Priorities for action

24 (i). To ensure the use of **traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices**, as appropriate, to complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and the development and implementation of policies, strategies, plans and programmes of specific sectors, with a cross-sectoral approach, which should be tailored to localities and to the context.

27 (h). To empower local authorities, as appropriate, through regulatory and financial means to work and coordinate with civil society, **communities and indigenous peoples** and migrants in disaster risk management at the local level.

V. Role of stakeholders

36 (a) (v). **Indigenous peoples**, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning.



6. Role of the Decent Work Agenda

The growing concern regarding the threats that climate change poses are clearly reflected in the range of recent international commitments aimed at climate change mitigation and adaptation and the attainment of sustainable development. Certain States, such as those that are part of the Climate Vulnerable Forum,¹ have repeatedly stressed the need for aggressive and urgent action to address climate change, in order to safeguard the progress made over the past few decades in poverty eradication. In this context, a just transition through inclusive green growth, and the creation of decent work, will be vital for achieving sustainable development and effective climate action. Without the inclusion of indigenous peoples in decision making, however, who have contributed little to climate change but suffer its harmful effects disproportionately, a just transition cannot be realized.

Moreover, without addressing the social, economic and environmental vulnerability of indigenous peoples, and without incorporating their traditional knowledge, occupations and ways of life into climate action, efforts to achieve sustainable development and effectively tackle threats of climate change will remain incomplete. Indigenous peoples as partners and crucial agents of change have a fundamental role to play in combating climate change, spurring green growth and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Decent Work Agenda has served as an important framework for the empowerment of indigenous peoples in several countries, and has enabled their meaningful participation in economic, social and political processes. Particularly in the context of climate change, the ILO guidelines for a just transition² are essential for ensuring climate justice, equity and fairness for all, including indigenous women and men. The ILO standards regarding consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples, and social dialogue more generally, provide the solid base that is necessary for stakeholders at the national level to be able to reach shared assessments and understandings, reconcile positions and policy perspectives that may otherwise appear to be in conflict, and design interventions for development and climate-related objectives. Given its experience and expertise on indigenous peoples' issues, and its rights-based approach to empowering indigenous women and men, the ILO is in a strong position to support stakeholders in their endeavour to achieve climate change mitigation and adaptation, and in the implementation, monitoring and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The rights-based approach to climate action not only counters the threats posed by climate change and the negative impacts of mitigation and adaptation efforts, but also enhances accountability, transparency and meaningful participation. These principles are key to making mitigation and adaptation efforts more ambitious, effective, inclusive, responsive and

¹ *The Climate Vulnerable Forum*, n.d., <http://www.thecvf.org/> [accessed: 10 June 2016].

² For more information, see ILO: *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* (Geneva, 2015).



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collaborative.³ The ILO approach promotes investing in indigenous communities and securing their rights. It puts people first,⁴ which is an essential social solution to tackling environmental problems.

Furthermore, by supporting governments as well as trade unions, employers' organizations and indigenous peoples' organizations, the ILO has been addressing the issues faced by indigenous peoples from multiple perspectives, with gender equality and non-discrimination⁵ as underlying principles. Its interventions have focused on governance, including building capacity for legal and policy reforms, establishing consultation mechanisms, addressing violations of

³ For more information, see OHCHR: *Analytical study on the relationship between climate change and the human right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (advanced edited version)* (Human Rights Council, 2016).

⁴ For instance, with regard to adaptation, see M. Harsdorff, M. Lieu-Kie-Song, M. Tsukamoto: *Towards an ILO approach to climate change adaptation* (Geneva, ILO, Employment Working Paper No. 104, 2011).

⁵ For more information, see the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). Available at: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C111. Also see ILO: *Eliminating discrimination against indigenous and tribal peoples in employment and occupation – A Guide to ILO Convention No. 111* (Geneva, 2007).



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fundamental rights at work, promoting sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurship development, strengthening access to traditional lands and natural resources, and creating inclusive social protection floors. Greater attention is also being directed towards indigenous persons with disabilities. At the same time, the ILO's targeted programmes and focus areas, such as the Green Jobs Programme; the Employment Intensive Investment Programme; promotion of Convention No. 169 and support for its implementation; formalization of the informal economy; promotion of decent work in the rural economy; and the extension of social protection floors, cut across indigenous peoples' social, economic, political and environmental spheres and can play an important role in achieving green growth.

Empowering communities, achieving sustainable development and combating climate change require partnerships, collaboration and dialogue among a range of stakeholders. In this context, the ILO has been collaborating with its UN partners in efforts to secure indigenous peoples' well-being through interventions in several countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. Most important, the ILO has a unique tripartite structure that brings together governments, trade unions and employers' organizations, all of which are key stakeholders in terms of tackling the impacts of climate change and in shaping and implementing climate action. With support from the ILO, trade unions and indigenous peoples in the Latin American region have built innovative networks and alliances to promote their common concerns.⁶ This collaboration has the potential to give a much stronger voice to climate change concerns and to influence related decision-making. The ILO is grounded in an approach that promotes social dialogue among all stakeholders and its unique tripartite structure enables it to harness partnerships, promote ownership, and reach across local, national, regional and international levels, all of which are crucial for addressing the threats posed by climate change.

⁶ OIT: *Alianzas entre sindicatos y pueblos indígenas: experiencias en América Latina* (Lima, ACTRAV/OIT, 2015).



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Climate change is one of the most daunting challenges confronting our world today. It endangers the progress made in poverty eradication over the course of several decades, while its impacts pose the greatest threat to groups which have contributed the least to its causes, such as indigenous peoples. Many consider it the most significant challenge to human rights and development, and it raises numerous ethical concerns related to justice and equity. Dedicated and rights-based climate action, however, provides an important opportunity to achieve a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all. Indigenous peoples as agents of change play a leading role in bringing about this transition.

The ILO at work: *Promoting rights and participation together with sustainable livelihoods and enterprises*

Achieving land and livelihood security in Cambodia: Working in partnership with the German Agency for International Cooperation, (GIZ), the ILO has supported the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights to lands and natural resources in connection with the implementation of the country's 2001 Land Law. As of February 2015, the ILO had supported 166 indigenous communities, 114 of which received certification of indigenous identity from the Ministry of Rural Development, 97 were registered as legal entities, and 16 obtained communal land titles. This intervention has strengthened the rights and livelihood security of indigenous peoples in Cambodia and has played an important role in safeguarding their traditional knowledge and providing them with access to decent work, which together are important precursors for the empowerment of indigenous women and men, enabling them to emerge as agents of change.

Strengthening mechanisms for consultation and participation: The ILO has played a key role in supporting the setting up of mechanisms for consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples across all levels of decision-making in several countries. In so doing, the ILO brings together governments, trade unions, employers' organizations, and indigenous peoples' organizations. In 2014 and 2015, with the support of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), a series of workshops were conducted in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua to improve negotiation skills and dialogue concerning indigenous peoples' rights. Similarly, in Peru, in 2014, the ILO conducted capacity-building activities that focused on participation in consultation processes, with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and in collaboration with the Ministry of Intercultural Affairs. Also in 2014, the ILO, together with the agencies constituting the United Nations Indigenous Peoples Partnership, supported the preparation of the draft framework act on prior consultation in the Plurinational States of Bolivia, in which there were more than 500 participants, ranging from indigenous peoples' representatives to public officials. The strengthening of mechanisms for consultation and participation, areas in which the ILO possesses significant expertise, is the initial step required to ensure that interventions directed towards development, economic growth and climate change have positive outcomes for all stakeholders, in particular those most at risk of being left behind.

Fighting discrimination and securing rights in Cameroon: Realizing the important role that the media plays in safeguarding rights and destroying stereotypes, the ILO, supported by the European Union, organized training activities that brought together indigenous peoples and media professionals. This intervention raised the awareness of media professionals and strengthened their ability to report on indigenous peoples' issues; established a channel of communication between mass media and indigenous groups, enabling them to combat stereotypes together; and promoted respect for indigenous peoples' culture, identity and rights. Building such bridges between actors who play a crucial role in bringing about change, and ending cycles of discrimination to create an environment where identity, knowledge and innovation can prosper, are essential for the achievement of development that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient to climate change.



Selected ILO tools and resources

Online portals and key documents

- [ILO topical web portal on indigenous and tribal peoples](#)
- [ILO topical web portal on Green Jobs](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples' Rights for Inclusive and Sustainable Development – ILO Strategy for Action](#)
- [Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all](#)

Reports and studies

- [Indigenous Peoples in the World of Work in Asia and the Pacific: A Status Report](#)
- [Procedures for consultations with indigenous peoples - Experiences from Norway](#)
- [The Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Asia: Human rights-based overview of national legal and policy frameworks against the backdrop of country strategies for development and poverty reduction](#)
- [Estudio sobre la situación laboral de las mujeres indígenas en el Perú \(English version: The Labour Situation of Indigenous Women in Peru: A Study\)](#)
- [Indigenous Persons with Disabilities: Access to Training and Employment](#)
- [United Nations Indigenous Peoples Partnership success stories – Cooperating to promote and protect indigenous peoples' rights](#)
- [Convenio núm. 169 de la OIT sobre Pueblos Indígenas y Tribales en Países Independientes y la consulta previa a los pueblos indígenas en proyectos de inversión. Reporte regional: Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Chile](#)

Briefs and notes

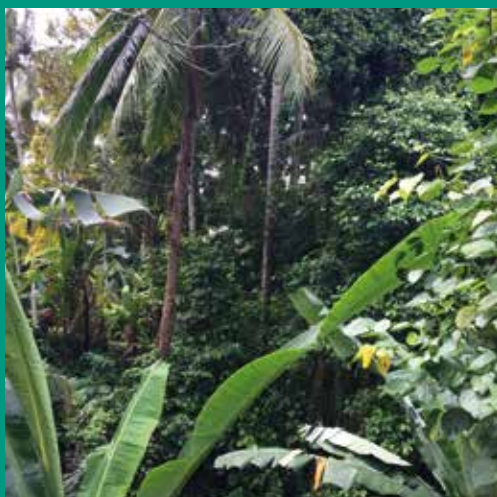
- [Sustainable Development Goals: Indigenous Peoples in Focus](#)
- [Securing rights, creating jobs and ensuring sustainability: A cooperative way for empowering indigenous peoples](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples in the World of Work: Snapshots from Asia](#)
- [Indigenous peoples in domestic work – Facing multiple discrimination and disadvantage](#)

Guides

- [Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 \(No. 169\) – Handbook for ILO tripartite constituents](#)
- [Alianzas entre sindicatos y pueblos indígenas: experiencias en América Latina](#)
- [Guía para fortalecer las capacidades de los empleadores en la aplicación del convenio 169 sobre pueblos indígenas y tribales en países independientes](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples in Cameroon: A Guide for Media Professionals](#)

Info-graphic videos

- [Indigenous Peoples: Agents of Change](#)
- [El Convenio 169 y la consulta: algunas preguntas frecuentes](#)



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