Introduction

Prioritizing Indigenous Peoples’ rights to lands, territories and resources

2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which has been essential for Indigenous Peoples’ rights worldwide as it offers a universal legal framework that underscores the fundamental values of equality, non-discrimination and justice.

In 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which was Indigenous Peoples’ own milestone in the development of the human rights framework. Indigenous Peoples’ collective rights are recognised in the UNDRIP, including the rights to self-determination and to lands, territories and resources.

The right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), as spelled out in UNDRIP Article 32, is one of the most fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples, who have the right to give or withhold consent for any project affecting their lands, territories and resources. And their decision must be respected. Despite this core right, powerful actors continue to encroach onto Indigenous Peoples’ territories in all regions of the world without genuine FPIC.

Indigenous Peoples live in their ancestral territories; maintain, to a large extent, their unique cultures, traditions, knowledge, and languages; and continue to protect much of the world’s remaining cultural and biological diversity. Since the 1948 UDHR adoption, they have come a long way organizing themselves in a global movement supported by many allies; secured their rights in national and international law; won important legal cases; and play active roles in major international processes affecting their rights and livelihoods.

We continue to stand by Indigenous Peoples as an important ally in their struggle.

Supporting the Indigenous movement in 2023

In 2023, IWGIA, alongside 55 partners, achieved important results under its four programmes in 32 countries aimed at promoting and defending Indigenous Peoples’ rights. These achievements include:

- engaging with climate change and biodiversity policies in 7 countries in Asia and Africa, as well as at the international level with the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and at the EU (read more in our Climate Change section on page 10);
- reporting on, monitoring and protesting against Indigenous Peoples’ human rights violations in 32 countries of the Arctic, Africa, Asia and Latin America (read more in our Land Defence and Territorial Governance section on page 16);
- advancing toward the full recognition of Indigenous autonomies in 6 countries and supporting the development and implementation of strategies for the recognition and management of 16 Indigenous territories in Latin America, Africa and Asia (read more in our Land Defence and Territorial Governance section on page 16);
- supporting 9 Indigenous women’s organisations and networks in 6 countries and at the regional level in Asia (read more in our Indigenous Women section on page 30); and
- engaging with partners in 18 international and regional human rights mechanisms by organizing sessions, dialogues and side events, as well as submitting communications and inputs to reports (read more in our Global Governance section on page 24).

We documented Indigenous Peoples’ rights through 58 publications, podcasts and videos/streams, including the publication of The Indigenous World 2023, focusing on conservation measures that cause human rights violations of Indigenous Peoples worldwide, as well as the best practices of Indigenous Peoples for biodiversity conservation.
We also documented Indigenous Peoples’ rights and struggles and IWGIA activities in 143 articles, statements, and appeals, including through our monthly magazine Debates Indígenas (Indigenous Debates), and continued our work with the academic world by engaging with 7 universities.

We continued our outreach with key media outlets in English, Spanish and Danish, and were featured in the press more than 80 times with key topics being the negative effects conservation and green energy projects have on Indigenous Peoples, as well as the dangers Indigenous individuals and organizations face for speaking up about their human rights.

**Solidifying funding, implementing strategies and adapting**

In 2023, IWGIA collaborated with 18 different donors (governments, foundations, and multilateral agencies) through 21 grants. We also secured another four-year grant (2024-2027) from our long-standing partner, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

We were excited to start the year with the launch of IWGIA’s volunteer group, who named themselves “Verdens rødder” (Roots of the World). The volunteers decided to join IWGIA to learn and engage on Indigenous Peoples’ rights. The group carried out several activities, including film screenings, workshops and foraging tours in Denmark. There are now 20 active volunteers in the group.

In 2023, as part of the implementation of our Gender Strategy 2021-2025, we carried out a gender audit with the aim of identifying gaps and strengths in our gender work. The audit recommended that IWGIA continues integrating Indigenous women in all our thematic programmes and develops a specific programme on Indigenous women to support Indigenous women’s own organizations and our partner’s actions to counter Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

2023 also marked the third year of our Institutional Strategy 2021 – 2025. This has encouraged us to carry out an internal mid-term review to see if we are on track and to start reflecting on the needs towards a new Institutional Strategy from 2026. While the world is changing fast and these changes are influencing our strategic thinking, we believe that our core focus on the rights to lands, territories and resources is still relevant. We, however, need to strengthen our work on gender and data, and will take it forward in our current work and in the development of the next strategy.

**Board and staff changes**

During the second half of 2023 we were happy to welcome two new staff members, one as Advisor on Conservation and Heritage, and the other as Senior Policy Advisor providing guidance in our discussions on the synergies between human rights, climate change, biodiversity and conservation.

At the end of 2023, we said goodbye to Sara Olsvig and Maria Bierbaum Oehlenschläger as their Board terms came to an end. It has been a great pleasure and a privilege to work with them – Sara with her deep knowledge and experience with regards to UN processes, Greenland and the Arctic, and Maria with her expertise in communications and related strategic processes.

In the autumn of 2023, the Board welcomed two newly appointed Board members for a three-year period: Peter Dawson, Aboriginal lawyer from Australia, currently working as a Senior Advisor at the Norwegian National Human Rights Institution, and Nauja Bianco, native Greenlander, who has worked in government and diplomacy and is now an independent consultant.

We are very honored that Peter and Nauja accepted the appointment, and we look forward to working with them over the coming three years. With Nauja and Peter on the Board, IWGIA has consolidated a strong Indigenous voice in its governance body and a majority of IWGIA’s Board are now Indigenous.

We are looking forward to another year of engaging closely with Indigenous Peoples all over the world, working in solidarity towards our goal of getting Indigenous Peoples’ rights to lands, territories and resources, and to self-determined development, promoted, respected and protected.

IWGIA is proud to stand by and with Indigenous Peoples. We thank all those who support us to do so.
Who we are; How we work

IWGIA is a non-governmental human rights organisation.

We protect and defend Indigenous Peoples’ collective and individual rights, including the right to self-determination by virtue of which they can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their self-determined economic, social and cultural development.

To us, everything begins with partnerships.

We work through a global network of partners, first and foremost Indigenous Peoples’ own organisations and networks but also support NGOs, academia, international human rights bodies and alliances. Over our more than 55-year history, IWGIA has built and developed unique, long-standing partnerships with Indigenous Peoples’ organisations and networks from all 7 Indigenous socio-cultural regions of the world.

Everything we do is with and in support of Indigenous Peoples.

Through our engagement with the Indigenous Peoples’ movement around the world, we have learned the importance of local leadership and flexible and agile support. In close cooperation with our partners, we coordinate, enhance and, when necessary, lead advocacy efforts at national, regional and international levels in pursuit of common objectives within a framework of dialogue, mutual trust, respect and cooperation.

In this way, IWGIA plays a global, facilitative support role for Indigenous Peoples and the advancement of their rights.

We protect and defend Indigenous Peoples’ rights

Our Triangle of Change is our key instrument for fostering change by:

• Documenting the situation of Indigenous Peoples and the human rights violations they experience;
• Advocating for change at local, national and international levels;
• Supporting the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples to claim and exercise their rights.

See our Institutional Strategy 2021 – 2025 here
Our core ambition

Indigenous Peoples’ rights to land, territories and resources and to self-determined development are promoted, respected and protected.

Supporting Empowerment

See how several Indigenous communities in Nepal have been using legal methods to secure the establishment of their own autonomous regions, including 13 local governments that have recognized the customary self-government and judicial systems of the Tharu people between 2021 and 2023, page 20.

Documenting

See how Indigenous Peoples in Brazil are using their community data, via the Indigenous Navigator, to document the way in which Brazil is applying international rules relevant to Indigenous Peoples’ rights, page 27.

Our vision

A world where Indigenous Peoples everywhere fully enjoy their internationally recognised rights.

Advocating

See how Indigenous Peoples from across Africa, who are often invisible in climate policy discussions in and among African States, were able to coordinate their participation and increase their visibility, voice and recognition at the Africa Climate summit, page 12.
The Indigenous World

IWGIA published The Indigenous World 2023 in English and Spanish. This yearly overview serves to document and report on the developments Indigenous Peoples have experienced throughout 2022.

The Indigenous World annual series is the unique result of a collaborative effort between Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists and scholars who voluntarily document and report on the situation of Indigenous Peoples’ rights. We thank them and celebrate the bonds and sense of community that result from the close cooperation needed to make this one-of-a-kind documentation tool available. IWGIA has published The Indigenous World in collaboration with this community of authors for 38 consecutive years since 1986.

It is internationally recognised as a unique monitoring tool and widely used by Indigenous Peoples, multilateral organisations, governments, development practitioners, academics and donors, serving as a quick and easy reference point for policy input to State officials, diplomatic missions, and officials of international institutions concerned with Indigenous Peoples’ rights and challenges.

The 2023 edition includes 73 articles (56 countries and 17 processes) with a special focus on conservation and Indigenous Peoples’ rights. Since its launch, the 2023 edition has been downloaded 22,000 times in English and 8,000 times in Spanish. The book was launched at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York.

“*The Indigenous World has assisted me in my advocacy work ... The Indigenous World has plugged the knowledge gap and people are slowly starting to appreciate the San as equal human beings.*” — Davy Ndlovu, Director, Tsoro-o-tso San Development Trust (TSDT) and author of the Zimbabwe article in the 2023 edition

Indigenous Peoples in Tanzania face increasing threats of evictions from their lands in the name of nature and biodiversity conservation. This is also the case for many of the Maasai people living in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania, which is a multiple land use area and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. CREDIT: Geneviève Rose / IWGIA
Indigenous Peoples in 2023*

476 million Indigenous people worldwide

90+ countries

4,000+ languages

6% of the world’s population

19% of the world’s poor

* Data from International Labour Organization (ILO)
Our work in 2023

32 COUNTRIES

55 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

18 INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

7 UNIVERSITIES

8 ALLIANCES

58 PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND VIDEOS
Climate Change

Indigenous Peoples worldwide are among the first to face the effects of climate crisis and biodiversity collapse. Indigenous Peoples are therefore at the frontline of pushing for actions to counter climate change. The important role of Indigenous Peoples in the protection and conservation of biodiversity and vital carbon sinks is well established. Indigenous Peoples manage and protect at least 28 percent of the global land surface and studies from the Amazon show that deforestation rates are two to three times lower in the lands and territories they manage. Despite having contributed the least to the climate crisis, and despite being recognised for their respect for the natural world, Indigenous Peoples are not only disproportionately affected by climate change; they are also increasingly negatively impacted by top-down mitigation and adaptation efforts on their lands and territories. IWGIA’s Climate Change Programme strives to ensure that the impact of climate change on Indigenous Peoples’ rights, and of the corresponding response measures, is promptly addressed and remedied while simultaneously advocating that Indigenous Peoples themselves are recognised as key actors in climate governance. In 2023, the Programme also formally included a focus on the interlinked global challenge of biodiversity collapse.

Addressing the barriers for Indigenous Peoples’ participation in climate governance

In 2023, IWGIA published the study “Consolidating the rights of Indigenous Peoples in climate governance through the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform”. The report, co-authored by several Indigenous activists, analyses the main contributions, limitations, and expectations arising from the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The study constitutes a formal submission to the forthcoming review of the Facilitative Working Group of the LCIPP in 2024.

The study recognises that, at all levels, in all regions of the world, Indigenous Peoples face systemic, colonial barriers to their right to self-determination, and that this injustice is also evident in the multilateral sphere, where decisions are taken almost exclusively by the governments of nation-states. Such is the case of the UNFCCC, which does not even mention Indigenous Peoples in its convention text from 1992, thereby failing to consider the visions and participation of Indigenous Peoples. Despite these limitations, the agency and advocacy of the international Indigenous Peoples’ movement, organised under the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), has made it possible to shake the foundations of this status quo.

Established by the Parties in 2015, the LCIPP is a mechanism that represents a significant step towards the recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ rights within the UNFCCC. While it is still early days, the emerging impact of the LCIPP includes increased awareness and visibility of Indigenous Peoples’ climate leadership and crucial role in climate governance, new partnerships at the international level, including collaboration with other bodies under and outside the UNFCCC, and the slow yet gradual recognition of Indigenous Peoples in national climate plans, policies and mechanisms.

That said, the study also finds several ongoing barriers that continue to limit the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UNFCCC. These barriers include the reluctance of States to respect Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination, and a consideration of Indigenous knowledge as practices rather than holistic knowledge systems of vital importance.
in times of climate crisis and biodiversity collapse. Another barrier relates to Indigenous Peoples’ participation, seen by States as a procedure rather than a right, resulting in persistent marginalisation from decision-making, lack of engagement by State Parties, and procedural constraints within the UNFCCC. Additionally, there is a lack of capacity at the national level, hindering the effectiveness of Indigenous engagement in climate governance. As a result, the mandate given to the LCIPP has not fully captured the complexity and integrative nature of Indigenous knowledge systems and the LCIPP’s potential to contribute to climate governance thus has yet to be fully realised.

The study concludes that, despite these limitations, the LCIPP offers new windows of opportunity and demonstrates the possibility of transforming institutions and climate policy. It is now imperative that States rise to the challenge of responding to the climate crisis through a just, effective, integrated, and rights-based approach.

Throughout 2023, IWGIA’s work on climate continued to address the adverse impacts of climate change, and of the corresponding response measures, on Indigenous Peoples’ rights. The work has supported actions that strive to ensure that Indigenous Peoples themselves are recognised as key actors in climate governance. Accordingly, IWGIA has supported Indigenous Peoples’ organisations to assert their rights in national and international climate and biodiversity policy formulation and implementation, and to monitor rights safeguarding compliance at the territorial level. IWGIA has also supported and documented the contributions of Indigenous women to climate action, raised awareness about the challenges that Indigenous women face as a consequence of climate change, and worked towards the inclusion of Indigenous women in decision and policy making related to climate change.

IWGIA and its partners promoted 25 Indigenous-led actions for national climate policy in India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Tanzania and Thailand.

IWGIA and its partners promoted 25 Indigenous-led actions for international climate policy at the UNFCCC, Global Climate Fund (GCF), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), European Union and UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).
in 2022 in partnership with Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, has also been used by the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) in their statements on the Stocktake.

The Paris Agreement mandates such global stocktakes every five years as a process for countries and stakeholders to see where they are collectively making progress towards meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement – and where they are not. The IWGIA policy paper recommended that this process also take global stock of the level of recognition of Indigenous Peoples and their rights in global climate action.

As a result of the effective advocacy of Indigenous Peoples, nine references to Indigenous Peoples were included in the final Global Stocktake decision text, including references to Indigenous Peoples’ rights in the preamble, as well as references to Indigenous knowledge and values, and the contributions of Indigenous Peoples at national levels. It is worth noting that, despite this positive recognition in the Global Stocktake, and despite the increasing number of references related to Indigenous Peoples in the NDCs, questions remain as to the standards of this recognition. Sufficient and appropriate mechanisms are not yet in place to operationalise this recognition. Parties must therefore make more significant efforts to ensure that the NDCs take a rights-based approach and contribute to strengthening Indigenous Peoples’ role and say in climate governance.

In line with the recommendation from the three UN special mechanisms dedicated to Indigenous Peoples (see Global Governance section on page 24), a key priority of Indigenous Peoples’ advocacy was to avoid the conflation of “Indigenous Peoples and local communities”, a term that is feared could lead to a watering down of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. This was also largely successful in the Global Stocktake decision text.

IWGIA supported nine Indigenous Peoples’ representatives to attend and engage in COP 28. IWGIA and its partners also co-organised a side event to discuss the loss and damage experienced by Indigenous Peoples as a result of climate change. The event was attended by 75 participants. In addition, 250-300 Indigenous representatives of the IIPFCC successfully coordinated their positions and statements through caucus meetings partly supported by IWGIA.

Indigenous Peoples asserting their rights through the Africa Climate Summit

In September 2023, the Africa Climate Summit was held in Nairobi, Kenya as part of the UNFCCC regional climate week. With contributions from IWGIA and other supporters, Indigenous Peoples were able to coordinate their participation and increase their visibility, voice and recognition at the summit, as Indigenous Peoples are often invisible in many policy discussions in and among African states. Given the reluctance of African governments to recognise Indigenous Peoples, the advocacy efforts of Indigenous Peoples at the Africa Climate Summit, and later at COP 28, represent an important achievement and a momentum-creating opportunity for Indigenous Peoples to assert their rights in climate action and climate governance on the continent.

In the lead-up to the summit, many expectations were raised by different stakeholders, including African governments, investors, the private sector and civil society. Indigenous Peoples in Africa were concerned from the outset, though, especially because Indigenous Peoples were not mentioned in the original agenda for the summit. The lack of recognition of their collective
rights throughout the continent makes Indigenous Peoples vulnerable when it comes to climate-related mitigation initiatives.

For example, African governments have eyed an opportunity for much needed income and international investment through terrestrial carbon markets. Often, however, the lands required for these schemes are in fact already protected by Indigenous Peoples who are the original inhabitants of these areas. Despite already protecting these lands, Indigenous Peoples risk being evicted or otherwise harassed as their lands are commodified into lucrative carbon schemes. Current examples, such as the violent eviction of hundreds of Ogiek from the Mau Forest Complex in Kenya, are likely to be either directly or indirectly linked to the financial interest in their lands for carbon schemes.

Indigenous Peoples in Africa were therefore adamant in raising their concerns and demands to have their rights safeguarded in the outcome of the summit, an outcome which was to be presented at COP 28 as a common position among African states. IWGIA’s partner, Mainyoito Pastoralists Integrated Development Organization (MPIDO), took the initiative to organise a two-day pre-summit for Indigenous Peoples of Africa to develop a strong common advocacy position. MPIDO also established a steering committee, constituting a number of Indigenous Peoples’ organisations, that facilitated the arrangements. IWGIA felt it important to support this self-determined advocacy initiative. We also supported the attendance of 16 Indigenous women leaders from nearly the same number of African countries, who ensured that Indigenous Peoples were heard during the Africa Climate Summit and also recognised in the outcome document. The pre-summit, in which more than 50 Indigenous representatives from 20 countries participated, resulted in a common Indigenous Peoples’ Declaration.

The advocacy of the steering committee in the lead-up to the summit resulted in Indigenous Peoples being included in the final agenda, being visible and being given a voice at the summit. Amongst the numerous opportunities created for engagement, a woman leader from MPIDO gave a statement on behalf of Indigenous Peoples at the opening plenary, summarising their Declaration and its demands. The Indigenous Peoples’ Declaration served as a guide for Indigenous Peoples’ advocacy throughout the Africa Climate Summit. As a result, the final Nairobi Declaration of the Africa Climate Summit includes three references to Indigenous Peoples and one reference to Indigenous knowledge.

“While the world agrees unanimously that Africa has the lowest adaptive capacity when it comes to climate change, Africa’s Indigenous Peoples are even more disadvantaged owing to the fact that their livelihoods are based on direct use of natural resources and are among those hit hardest by the consequences of climate change, notwithstanding that they have the lowest carbon footprint. Climate change conversation in Africa and pursuit for solutions cannot be without the African Indigenous Peoples. Despite the serious challenges that climate change has continued to expose us to, we also have contributions to make into the climate discourse. This is why IWGIA’s support for the engagement of Indigenous Peoples at the Africa Climate Summit was so important.”

ANNE SAMANTE, MPIDO, KENYA
Strengthening the climate resilience of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand

In Thailand, IWGIA supported its partners to equip 11 Indigenous leaders on how to use data tools for collecting information about the impact of climate change in 35 communities, and to equip 61 Indigenous youth on how to communicate about climate change and its effects on their communities.

IWGIA’s partner, Indigenous Peoples’ Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF), developed tools and a user manual for data gathering and conducted training on how to gather and use data. Key information was gathered on the impact of climate change in the communities on health, food sources, water sources, the agricultural production cycle, traditional seeds and natural disasters. Three dialogues were conducted with local authorities to discuss collaboration and support to communities on the implementation of climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness plans. This information was verified at the end of 2023 and will be used for preparing sub-district adaptation and disaster preparedness plans in 2024.

The project provided support to the Highland Nature Conservation Club, a community network, and to community members from 35 communities on the construction and maintenance of fire-break lines to prevent forest fires in the dry season and forest patrolling. Huay Som Poi village also received support to conserve aquatic animals in the Mae Tia River. Finally, an initial collaboration was established with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) on the provision of academic and technical support to Indigenous communities.

IWGIA’s partner, the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT), trained 61 Indigenous youth on human rights, communication and campaigning on climate change. The Indigenous youth participants gained knowledge of climate change and environmental policies that affect the lives of their communities and enhanced their communication skills. As a follow-up to the training, they were able to write stories about their communities and the impact of climate change. They also learned how to document Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge and practices that have been instrumental in conserving biodiversity and reducing climate change impacts in two communities.

“The project supported by IWGIA is highly beneficial, especially in supporting and promoting Indigenous communities to revive traditional knowledge, assess and analyse the impacts of global warming on their communities, and use this information to develop and implement plans to cope with the increasingly severe climate changes.” Kittisak Rattanakrajangsri, Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples’ Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF)
Engaging with Indigenous youth on climate issues

IWGIA produced four videos with Indigenous youth sharing what change they would like to see in the world in 10 years. These interviews were conducted in June 2023, at the UNFCCC Bonn Climate Change Conference, when IWGIA asked Indigenous youth to share their reflections on the climate crisis.

We are affected by climate change in many ways.

Sustainability is part of the category that is often mentioned here as an objective.

Many animals have gone extinct, many fish species have gone extinct.

Well, I think it is important to be in these spaces as an Indigenous community.

I think it is really important for us to be

sustainability is a concept that has always been in our communities.
**Land Defence and Territorial Governance**

Indigenous Peoples are losing their lands every day, and this has particularly devastating effects on Indigenous women. Indigenous Peoples are being criminalised, harassed or even killed for attempting to protect their territories. IWGIA’s land defence and territorial governance programmes leverage Indigenous Peoples’ efforts to claim and exercise their rights to land, territories and resources at national, regional and international levels. IWGIA supports Indigenous Peoples to protest land rights violations in a safer way, contribute to increasing their land tenure security, and reinforce the creation and consolidation of Indigenous autonomy by assisting them in establishing their own self-governance systems and land management plans.

**Land grabbing and attacks on Indigenous Peoples’ human rights defenders**

In 2023, land grabbing happened virtually everywhere Indigenous Peoples live and was driven by powerful forces, including governments, businesses and dominant elites, which are pushing projects of all sizes – from small artisanal mining operations to mega development/infrastructure projects – without respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Attacks on Indigenous Peoples’ rights activists reflect a continued shrinking democratic space, and an increasing number of attacks are being detected against Indigenous Peoples’ human rights defenders who are trying to protect the ancestral lands and forests that are being exploited by extractive industries, agribusinesses and even “green” energy projects, among others.

In Bangladesh, there were over 24 dangerous incidents in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), including violent attacks and forcible land occupation/grabbing attempts, which led to over 200 Indigenous persons suffering human rights violations, including the killing of six persons. In the plains, over 10 such incidents were also reported. Further, our partners who document these violations and fight for Indigenous Peoples’ rights are under constant threat of surveillance and intimidation. In the Philippines, four leaders from our partner organization, the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), were arbitrarily accused of terrorism, and the human rights violations have intensified, including unrelenting surveillance, threats, harassment, intimidation, trumped-up cases, and freezing of organizational and personal assets, all of which continues to negatively affect our partners. In Nepal, numerous hydroelectric projects are being pursued, many of which threaten Indigenous Peoples’ lands and lives and, as such, many Indigenous people are trying to oppose and rally against these projects. In 2023, armed police forces targeted their weapons specifically at the Tamang women who formed part of a demonstration demanding that the construction of an electricity substation on their land be stopped.

This monument to the government-driven Muraichhara Eco-Park project in Bangladesh, created without the free, prior and informed consent of the Garo and Khasi peoples who own the land, has been left in ruins after successful protests by Indigenous Peoples have stalled the park’s completion since the early 2000’s. This event galvanized the strong Indigenous movement in the country. CREDIT: Signe Leth / IWGIA
You can read more about the negative impact of hydroelectric projects on Indigenous Peoples in Nepal here: Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the Tamang Indigenous Peoples of Nepal.

In early November, authorities from the Kenya Forest Service and Kenya Wildlife Service rangers forcibly evicted over 700 Ogiek women, children and men, who were only informed of the forced eviction just days earlier, effectively receiving no prior warning, other information or plans for relocation or reparations. The actions of the Government of Kenya are in direct violation of two pioneering legal judgements of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights that our partners fought to achieve over many long years. The judgements recognize Ogiek ownership of their ancestral land in the Mau Forest and require the government to return the land to the Ogiek and pay for material and moral damages. Read more about the Ogiek in our programme highlight on page 19: Pushing for the implementation of court rulings in Kenya.

In Tanzania, the land dispossession, forced displacement and human rights abuses of the Maasai community living in Loliondo and Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) remains an ongoing crisis, drastically affecting the lives of our partners and thousands of Maasai people. In the NCA, the government continues to push for the relocation of communities from the area and is limiting their access to basic services such as education, water and health.

In Ecuador, Indigenous leader Eduardo Mendúa, of the A’i Cofán of the Dureno community, denounced the violence caused by internal disagreements in his community due to the imposition of an oil project by State-owned Petroecuador. Just over a month later, on 26 February, Mendúa was murdered, shot 12 times at his home. In Peru, our partners, the Awajún and Wampís territories, have come under constant attack from illegal miners, sometimes under the protection of mining concessions granted on communal territories. In May, an armed attack that could have resulted in many deaths took place on the premises of the Awajún organization, ODECOFROC (Organization for the Development of the Border Communities of the Cenepa Basin), which was resisting an invasion from illegal miners. In Bolivia, unregulated gold mining, as well as other extractive and infrastructure projects such as highway construction, continues to take a toll on Indigenous territories and protected areas. Read more about our work with autonomies in Peru in our programme highlight on page 21: Advancing autonomy in Peru.

IWGIA is doing all it can for its partners in these terrible situations. With our support, they have been able to further build and sustain their leadership and movements at local, national, and international levels and to document and advocate against land rights violations. For our partners who are in immediate danger, our support also includes emergency funding for the provision of legal assistance, counselling, accommodation, and food during their temporary relocation. This emergency assistance provides them with immediate relief and helps prevent even worse cases of human rights violations. Having this flexibility of funding is key in the fight for Indigenous Peoples’ rights to land, territories, and natural resources, and is increasingly needed as Indigenous Peoples face further losses while the world grapples with a worsening poly-crisis.

IWGIA and our partners protested 35 land rights violations and violations against Indigenous Peoples’ human rights defenders in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal, the Philippines and Tanzania.

IWGIA supported 16 Indigenous communities/territories that are in the process of developing or implementing strategies for the recognition and/or management of their territories in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Nepal, Peru, Kenya and Tanzania.

IWGIA supported 6 established Indigenous self-governed territories in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.
**Strengthening the legitimacy of the National Human Rights Commission in India**

In India, IWGIA’s support for the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) led to an important ruling from the Manipur High Court that upheld the need for the Manipur State government to comply with the orders of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). This is particularly significant because it not only strengthens the power of the NHRC but also sets a precedent by which the authority of the NHRC can be extended to other Indian states, thereby increasing access to this important mechanism for the realization of human rights for thousands.

**Fighting land grabbing through conflict resolution in Tanzania**

In Tanzania, land conflicts between pastoralists, farmers and other land users have been significantly reduced in 10 villages via interventions implemented by IWGIA partner organization PAICODEO (Parakuyo Pastoralists Indigenous Community Development Organisation). PAICODEO has established “farmer-pastoralist conflict resolution platforms” through which they conduct multiple dialogues between farmers and pastoralists that are significantly contributing to resolving conflicts. More specifically, in the Kilindi District, this has led to the district government developing a strategy to control the arbitrary sale of land by village leaders, which has often led to conflicts between groups.

The unregulated sale of land in the district stems from some village leaders considering grazing areas as unclaimed land due to the lack of any visible development on the land, together with the presence of natural vegetation and pasture, as kept by pastoralists, thus leading them to conclude that they can sell this seemingly unclaimed land. Such practices resulted, for instance, in violent clashes in Elerai village where a police team had to set up a special unit to stop the fighting and arrest those involved. The situation was so serious that the Tanzanian Prime Minister set up a commission to investigate the cause of the conflict. As a result, selling land without the approval of the district council’s Land Officer is now prohibited, and village leaders who violate these procedures are questioned and warned not to sell land. This process has been recognized as a best practice by pastoralists, who further demand that the same procedures be implemented in other districts. Thankfully, this has been accepted by other districts, such as Morogoro.

IWGIA supported PAICODEO to establish these farmer-pastoralist conflict resolution platforms in 10 villages, where a total of 124 members participated. Additionally, PAICODEO conducted numerous training sessions for district commissioners’ offices and the police to sensitize them to the platforms and their purpose in order to ensure they were in favour of the platforms. Thanks to this training, the district governments were able to resolve land disputes and restore peace in project villages where serious conflicts and clashes took place.

“**This is a great achievement that now a platform for dialogue between farmers and pastoralists in our village will help maintain peaceful co-existence among farmers and pastoralists.**” Ms Kiroreil Kalunju Neng’u, Kwamwande village, Kilindi district, Tanga region

Members of farmer-pastoralist conflict resolution platforms at Kwambe village, Kilosa district, Tanzania, discussing symbiotic relationships between farmers and pastoralists. CREDIT: PAICODEO
ACHR also intervened in 62 complaints with the NHRC, including 33 complaints against attacks targeting Indigenous Peoples’ human rights defenders and 29 cases related to forced evictions of Indigenous persons from forest land, displacement, denial of right to food, sexual violence and custodial violence during the COVID-19 outbreak. This strategy of approaching the NHRC, rather than going through other, slower routes for filing criminal cases led to speedier criminal proceedings. Of the 62 cases investigated in 2023, 18 are currently pending final ruling and 44 have been ruled on. Nineteen of these were ruled on favourably, including compensation for victims and departmental actions/criminal proceedings against officials and non-state actors.

ACHR also conducted training that brought 200 journalists, lawyers, and Indigenous Peoples’ rights activists together with the aim of increasing cooperation between all the groups in order to address the human rights violations reported to them more effectively.

Pushing for the implementation of court rulings in Kenya

Despite the violent evictions of 700 Ogiek women, children and men in late 2023, with IWGIA’s support, the Ogiek Peoples’ Development Programme (OPDP) held the 5th Ogiek Cultural Festival, which served as an important platform for strengthening strategic alliances, including with the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), the Commission on Administrative Justice (CAJ) and national and county governments. Such alliances proved invaluable during the violent evictions that happened soon after the festival as the KNCHR and CAJ were able to step in and secure temporary stays in the evictions.

The Ogiek people are an Indigenous hunter/gatherer people who have suffered human rights violations and evictions from their ancestral land in the Mau Forest, in western Kenya, for many years. In 2017, they won an important legal land rights case against the Government of Kenya at the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights. In 2022, the African Court delivered a pioneering reparation judgement concerning the rights of the Ogiek to their ancestral land in the Mau Forest. IWGIA has consistently supported OPDP since 2010 in its Ogiek in Narok county, southwestern Kenya, celebrating the 5th Ogiek Cultural Festival with song and dance. CREDIT: Ogiek Peoples’ Development Program (OPDP)
long and committed fight for land justice, including pushing for the proper implementation of the 2017 and 2022 rulings, which have so far been blatantly ignored and are threatening the rights and future existence of the Ogiek. If implemented correctly, these landmark rulings will give land tenure security to the Ogiek people.

With the support of IWGIA, OPDP also established an external committee of experts comprising eight members to monitor the implementation of the rulings through the development of an implementation roadmap and plan. OPDP also supported the Ogiek in filing a joint submission to the National Land Commission (NLC) on historical land injustices. Members of the Ogiek community, led by the Council of Elders, supported the NLC community visits to validate the claims and Ogiek registers in all Ogiek areas.

**Building autonomy in Nepal**

In Nepal, Indigenous Peoples from the Majhi, Magar, Newa, Limbu, Tamang, Tharu and Shanthal communities are calling for the establishment of autonomous regions with legal support from IWGIA’s partner organization, LAHURNIP (Lawyers’ Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples), which supports the mobilization of Indigenous leaders and rights defenders in their efforts towards self-determination.

ILO 169, UNDRIP and some constitutional provisions, together with Local Government Operation Act 2017, have provided opportunities to secure Indigenous autonomy to some degree. Article 56(5) of the constitution and section 9(3) and 99 of the Local Government Operation Act 2017 include provisions for special, protected and autonomous regions for the socio-cultural and economic development of Indigenous Peoples. Autonomy can thus be granted to areas with marginalized communities where most live below the national poverty level, and when they are populated by one or more linguistic, ethnic or cultural minority group(s).

Between 2021 and 2023, with the advisory support of LAHURNIP, a total of 13 local governments used such laws to recognize the customary self-government and judicial systems of the Tharu people. Similarly, the local government in Morang district endorsed a resolution to recognize the customary institution of the Shanthal people and to establish a cultural protected area for the Shanthal. The Magar Indigenous people have been making demands to declare the Naumule Rural Municipality a Magar autonomous region for the past four years, leading the current local government to form a taskforce in July 2023 to carry out a study and draft a bill in accordance with the aspirations of the Magar. The Shankarapur Municipality in Kathmandu likewise formed a task force in March 2023 to carry out a study to establish cultural protected areas and formal recognition of the customary self-government system of the Newa people.

IWGIA is proud to support LAHURNIP as it continues to provide legal advice and technical support to both the Indigenous Peoples and local governments in the development of regulations to effectively implement the laws.
**Advancing autonomy in Peru**

IWGIA supports several Indigenous autonomies throughout Peru in a variety of activities that include strengthening their political structures and legitimacy with state entities, using emerging technologies to monitor forest resources and illegal activities, exemplifying how such technologies can be used hand-in-hand with traditional knowledge, and spreading this learning to other Indigenous communities across borders.

With IWGIA’s support, the Awajún Autonomous Territorial Government (GTAA) established a communications and information programme to closely accompany the formal process of politically consolidating the GTAA structure which, in 2023, concluded the process of electing the congressmen and congresswomen (or kakajam) to represent the 18 Awajún territorial sectors. Throughout this process, the Awajún communicator who is implementing the communication actions extensively covered various territorial meetings, meetings of women leaders, and meetings with state authorities. Support for the GTAA is important as it provides them with the ability to effectively coordinate and govern their territory through the establishment of robust institutional frameworks, participatory decision-making processes, and capacity-building initiatives.

The GTAA also strategically selected 13 communities from the Alto Nieva basin, known collectively as Tajimat Nugka Muun Numpatkaim, to engage in forest mapping activities using high-resolution satellite imagery and drones in order to increase the protection of their lands and forests. This helped raise awareness as to the detrimental impacts of illicit crop plantations, such as coca, which are threatening the peace and well-being of the Awajún people, including by increasing crime and human trafficking. It has also led to the production of maps illustrating current forest cover conditions, thus enhancing the decision-making capabilities of the GTAA regarding forest preservation. Other activities included empowering local facilitators to use geographic information systems (GIS), conducting participatory diagnostics using satellite imagery and GIS data, and engaging Awajún elders to impart ancestral knowledge on forest resource management. Interviews were recorded in various formats for dissemination through local media platforms, amplifying the rescued knowledge. The project culminated in the development of participatory strategies for the recovery of degraded areas and the consolidation of collective agendas for the control, monitoring, and sustainable management of natural resources in Alto Nieva.

With IWGIA’s support, the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation (GTANW) has been safeguarding their lands and rights from extractive industries, utilizing autonomous territorial units for collective governance during crises and external threats. The GTANW is formed of 27 Wampís communities, represents over 15,000 people, and stands as the first Indigenous government in Peru. The Wampís Nation has employed satellite imagery to visualize their territory’s status, particularly focusing on the Kampankias mountain range, a region crucial for their conservation efforts. Monitoring units have also been able to identify areas affected by oil spills, empowering Wampís authorities in their advocacy efforts to stop these illegal and dangerous activities.
Moreover, the development of a socio-environmental information system and an early warning mechanism have strengthened their ability to respond to threats more quickly and effectively. Other key achievements in 2023 include the establishment of monitoring focal points, the creation of baseline territorial data, and the preparation of a surveillance plan, all of which will contribute to greater protection of Wampís lands, territories and resources. Significantly, the project’s impact has extended beyond territorial boundaries, fostering collaboration with Indigenous organizations in Bolivia and Ecuador, and showcasing the potential of satellite imagery in advancing social, economic, and environmental development. Overall, it underscores the significance of Indigenous-led initiatives that integrate modern technology with traditional knowledge for effective governance and environmental conservation.

IWGIA collaborates on a variety of other initiatives related to autonomy and self-determination with the GTANW, GTAA and PUINAMUDT Indigenous platform, representing the Quechua, Achuar, Kichwa, and Kukama peoples in the basins of the Pastaza, Corrientes, Alto Tigre, and Marañón rivers. IWGIA continues to support important communication work via the training of young Indigenous communicators in various disciplines, such as radio communication techniques, social media, and the production of micro-videos, to help report on and document issues. We also continue to support Radio Wampi, the only radio station broadcasting news and information throughout the Indigenous territory.

“IWGIA has long supported Indigenous Peoples’ struggle for self-determination. It has shown great support and solidarity with the Awajún Autonomous Territorial Government in fighting our way to achieve territorial governance.”

Gil Inoach, President of the Awajún Autonomous Territorial Government
Documenting Indigenous Knowledge, self-government and human rights violations

“Indigenous Territorial Autonomy and Self-government in the Diverse Americas” published in collaboration with the University of Calgary. The contributions in this volume, many of them of Indigenous authorship, examine the challenges of self-determination and connect ancestral voices with contemporary issues. This book explains autonomy as a variety of practices, processes, and mechanisms of self-government through which the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants, and their sovereign aspirations, are expressed and become endowed with meaning.

“Genocidios indígenas en América Latina” [Indigenous Genocides in Latin America] is a book based on testimonies and research conducted in Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia documenting the severe abuses perpetrated by state agents, settlers, and corporations from the very emergence of states to the present day. It originates from an international seminar held in Brasilia in 2019 and is composed of testimonies from Indigenous and non-Indigenous anthropologists, documentalists, lawyers, and other professionals from the justice system.

“Piwam-Mera” is a documentary and podcast set in Colombia that documents the Indigenous Knowledge of the Misak around the management of water sources on their ancestral territory. Indigenous youth were engaged and trained in communications work and were in the driving seat for the production, supported by ARTE+ and Ala Kusreik Ya - Misak University, an Indigenous-led educational institution.
Global Governance

Indigenous Peoples’ rights have been recognised at the international level. However, for these rights to be respected and protected, they must also be recognised and operationalised at national and local levels. IWGIA’s Global Governance programme strengthens global-to-local linkages between national and international processes relevant to Indigenous Peoples’ rights across all its thematic programmes.

Knowledge of international processes and legal instruments for redress of human rights violations helps strengthen the position and demands of Indigenous Peoples towards States. This programme also strengthens Indigenous Peoples’ participation in and contribution to relevant global decision-making processes such as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Indigenous Peoples’ rights challenged at the international level

Despite the existing global consensus around the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), many conventions and processes are increasingly using the term “local communities” in relation to Indigenous Peoples. In 2023, in response to this growing trend, the three Indigenous-specific UN mandates—namely the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNSRIP), and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)—expressed their concern in a joint statement during the 16th Session of the EMRIP. In their statement, they emphasised that the unique and particular characteristics, nature, and origins of the rights of Indigenous Peoples are very different from other groups and that Indigenous Peoples should not be grouped with an undefined set of communities that may have very different rights and interests. Using terms such as “local communities” creates challenges for the proper implementation of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their right to self-identification. It is therefore important to acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as collective rights-holders rather than conflating them with other segments of society such as minorities, or local communities, and to respect the distinct rights and status of Indigenous Peoples in a manner consistent with the UNDRIP and its language, which was developed specifically by and for Indigenous Peoples globally.

In the context of the Human Rights Council (HRC), IWGIA is closely engaged in the discussion on how to enhance Indigenous Peoples’ participation in the UN according to the principle of self-determination as recognised in the UNDRIP. In this process, IWGIA supports Indigenous Peoples’ efforts to address the UN’s institutional recognition of their particular status as Indigenous Peoples.

IWGIA supports global-to-local linkages between national and international processes. This includes support for Indigenous representatives to engage in and contribute to international and regional mechanisms by making statements on Indigenous Peoples’ specific situations, developing substantive stakeholder reports, conducting and participating in side events, holding dialogues and submitting valuable inputs to policies and publications. In 2023, IWGIA and its partners engaged with, among others, the UNPFII, EMRIP,
In addition, acts of intimidation and reprisals perpetrated by government officials towards our partners during and after their participation in international meetings continued in 2023, exemplifying a growing practice of States attempting to silence civil society beyond borders. This was a harsh reality, particularly for our partners from Tanzania and Bangladesh. IWGIA has continued providing support to targeted Indigenous Peoples’ Human Rights Defenders, either by providing them with emergency funding to cover their stay in another country or through communication with the UN country offices and redress mechanisms, as well as with embassies.

Equipping the next generation of Indigenous Peoples’ Human Rights Defenders and decision-makers

In 2023, 56 participants from 15 African states, representing different Indigenous Peoples and state governments, were able to sit down together and discuss priority issues for Indigenous Peoples’ rights across Africa and elsewhere. This important dialogue opportunity was made possible by an IWGIA-supported one-week academic course conducted in close collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. The unique, high-level course at the University of Pretoria has been taking place for 12 consecutive years, continuously building on previous experiences, making it the only course of its kind in Africa and, as such, a course that is in high demand.

IWGIA’s engagement with universities extended to others as well. In 2023, IWGIA also engaged in two other human rights training programmes for Indigenous Peoples’ representatives aimed at utilising international human rights mechanisms for the protection of their rights. Fourteen young Indigenous activists from 11 different countries in Central and South America took part in a fellowship programme supported by IWGIA, the University of Deusto in Bilbao, Spain and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). These fellows not only attended the human rights course but also actively engaged in various international meetings and processes, including the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Universal Periodic Review, and the Forum on Business and Human Rights. IWGIA also supported the Master’s in Indigenous Rights and Development programme at the Gabriel René Moreno Autonomous University in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, which was taken by 45 participants.

Facilitating dialogues with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNSRIP)

In 2023, IWGIA continued its long-term engagement with the UNSRIP, facilitating dialogues between Indigenous Peoples’ representatives and the UNSRIP during his visits to Nepal, Denmark and Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland).
In February, IWGIA organized a dialogue between Kalaallit (Inuit) living in Denmark and the UNSRIP during his official visit to Denmark and Kalaallit Nunaat. During the dialogue, the UNSRIP was able to witness and hear testimonies of the many negative experiences of Kalaallit living in Denmark. Many stressed their grievances around the discriminatory adoption process Kalaallit have to endure, especially questioning the cultural biases of the psychological capability test for parents. They also criticised the Danish foster care system, which neither includes any procedures allowing Kalaallit children to preserve links with their homeland, culture and language, nor honours their traditions, including their own ways of fostering their children in order to keep a link with their community and culture. They also focused on the historical forced and often unknown insertion of intrauterine devices (IUDs) into women from the 1970s onwards, which was a contentious issue in 2023 in Danish and global media. They further shared their experiences of daily racism, and unequal or lack of access to proper medical care and education opportunities, differentiated application of government policies toward Kalaallit, lack of teaching Inuit history and culture in all Danish schools, as well as a lack of teaching in their mother tongue in Danish schools, and discrimination in the work place and job market, as just a few of the many human rights violations Kalaallit in Denmark face.

“Despite significant progress, during my visit, I observed that Inuit still face barriers to fully enjoying their human rights,” the UNSRIP said. “I call upon the Governments of Denmark and of Greenland to address the root causes of the negative impact of the legacies of colonialism that translate today into structural and systematic racial discrimination against Inuit both in Denmark and Greenland.”

In September, IWGIA also joined our partner in Nepal, the Lawyers’ Association for the Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP), in organising an academic visit for the UNSRIP to the country. Despite not being an official visit, this academic visit provided the opportunity to hold meetings and dialogues with Indigenous organisations in the country and visit various communities in order to gain a closer understanding of the human rights situation of Indigenous Peoples in Nepal.

Finally, several references and recommendations from IWGIA’s submission to the UNSRIP were incorporated into his thematic report on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and the Tourism Industry, which was presented at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly. IWGIA collected and analysed information from Indigenous Peoples’ organisations and experts from the different regions of the world into a submission report to provide the UNSRIP with additional insight into the various facets of the impact of tourism on Indigenous Peoples’ rights.
Engaging at the regional level in Latin America and Asia

Due to IWGIA’s strong knowledge of the context and Indigenous Peoples’ movement, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) requested that we assist them in organising a country visit to Bolivia in March 2023. IWGIA was mandated as a focal point for organising the dialogue between Indigenous Peoples’ leaders and the IACHR. IWGIA also supported Indigenous leaders to prepare for the meeting and agree on the demands to be presented to the IACHR. In its report, the IACHR identified that a remaining challenge includes the adoption of effective measures to enforce the right to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and the rights of Afro-Bolivians.

In 2023, IWGIA supported the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) to hold the Asia Preparatory Meeting on UN Mechanisms and Procedures Relating to Indigenous Peoples. Sixty-six participants, mainly Indigenous Peoples’ representatives in Asia, consolidated collective strategies for advocacy and other engagement in international and regional meetings. Participants came from 17 countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Taiwan/China, Thailand and Vietnam. The Asia Preparatory Meeting remains one of the most important meetings, allowing Indigenous Peoples in Asia to coordinate on key issues and concerns in the region and strategise their engagement in different UN mechanisms and regional mechanisms.

Monitoring the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

In 2023, the Indigenous Navigator (IN) significantly expanded its geographic reach, now being present in 29 countries and supporting monitoring in over 100 additional Indigenous communities. The community survey and IN tools continue to monitor the realisation of the rights of over 300,000 Indigenous persons in approximately 320 communities. In 2023, 175 new community surveys were conducted and uploaded to the IN portal. Of these, 30 had been finalised and reviewed by the end of the year and are now publicly available in the data explorer.

The results from the community surveys will form the basis for the development of small grant proposals, which will enable Indigenous communities that completed the community surveys to design and implement community-driven projects that address their specific needs and challenges. National-level data for seven new UN Member States — Argentina, Brazil, Guyana, Japan, South Africa, Sweden and Uganda — were completed and published, bringing the total of publicly available national surveys to 18, spanning the Arctic, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Development of the IN Portal is ongoing. 2023 saw the drafting of new modules and indicators to collect data on climate change, biodiversity and environmental due diligence in consultation with Indigenous Peoples from around the globe. These modules are expected to be fully integrated into the web portal by mid-2024, further enhancing the project’s monitoring of the realisation of Indigenous Peoples’ rights.

The IN has had a strong presence and engagement at international events, providing the opportunity to present the IN tools to a wider audience, as well as
engage in important conversations concerning the role of data generation in the context of Indigenous Peoples’ rights. The IN was presented at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the High-Level Political Forum, the UN World Data Forum, RightsCon, and the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) of the UN Statistical Division, among others. Further, IWGIA participated in the first international conference on Sámi research data governance held in Trømso, Norway, which also marked the official launch of the Global Indigenous Data Alliance-Sápmi network. The conference noted that there is a lack of official data, particularly in Sápmi, as well as a lack of information about Sámi communities across the many sectors the IN monitors. The dialogue reiterated the crucial role citizen-generated data (CGD) plays and emphasised how a lack of data impedes decision-making processes that affect issues involving the Sámi people and society. In October, that information gap decreased as IN national surveys for Finland, Norway and Sweden were completed and published, allowing for an overview and comparison of the national level of implementation of Indigenous Peoples’ rights in these countries.

“One of the things that makes the Indigenous Navigator different from other research tools is that Indigenous Peoples themselves are gathering the data, analysing the data and storing the data within the community.”

JAMES TWALA, ILEPA, KENYA

Engaging on global rights issues

IWGIA drafted a submission to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) on “Establishing monitoring mechanisms at the national and regional level for implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”. This was in addition to a submission to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on behalf of the Indigenous Navigator, to the Joint Programme of Work, on links between biological and cultural diversity; a review of and update to the four indicators on traditional knowledge.

IWGIA published “Self-determination, territorial autonomy and access to justice: Insights into the situation of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil from the Indigenous Navigator”, producing data and insights into the way in which Brazil is applying the international rules included in the International Labour Organization Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169); United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007, as well as other relevant human rights documents. The report’s main source of information was qualitative and quantitative data collected using the IN tools.

IWGIA published “Indigenous Peoples’ Customary Fishing Rights: Key Issues and Input from the Expert Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and Fisheries” together with the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR). This report provides an overview of the main issues related to the impacts of fisheries governance and relevant policies on the rights of Indigenous Peoples regarding traditional fishing and suggests targeted entry points for advocacy.
Indigenous women from Peru exchanging experiences from implementing Indigenous Navigator activities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

CREDIT: ONAMIAP
Indigenous women

Indigenous women are active change agents and important leaders in the movement and struggle for the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous women worldwide have built a movement and insisted on being given space to raise their issues within the broader Indigenous Peoples’ movement, as well as within the broader women's rights movement. However, Indigenous women experience a broad, multifaceted and complex spectrum of mutually reinforcing human rights abuses. They are disproportionately affected by systemic discrimination, excluded from local and national political processes, and form the targets of multiple forms of violence. IWGIA is providing support to projects directly developed and implemented by Indigenous women’s organisations. The projects focus on empowering Indigenous women and strengthening their leadership through awareness raising, civic education and supporting their participation in the development and review of legislation, policies and practices that affect them. We also pay particular attention to Indigenous women in relation to the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, as well as in relation to access to justice and remedies.

Indigenous women, gender-based violence (GBV)¹ and climate change

There are numerous challenges facing Indigenous women in relation to climate change. In accordance with culturally defined gender roles, Indigenous women are often the ones responsible for collecting firewood, fetching water, tending fields and feeding the family. These traditional occupations held by Indigenous women are under threat due to climate change.

For example, in Northern Kenya, the prolonged drought that has been ongoing for years has killed most of the livestock, leaving Indigenous communities from the area without a main source of livelihood and thus in extreme poverty. Conversely, following recent rains, severe floods led to lives being lost and people being displaced as many villages were rendered uninhabitable. Displacement particularly affected some women and girls who were forced, due to circumstances, to engage in transactional sex (sex work) in order to fend for themselves and their families and, as such, were at a high risk of suffering from gender-based violence (GBV) in the displacement camps. For many Indigenous women, climate change-induced disasters increase the risk of different forms of GBV, both within and outside their households. Unfortunately, there is a limited amount of disaggregated data on violence against women, as well as on the correlation between climate change and the increased risk of GBV. Furthermore, GBV against Indigenous women is highly under-reported.

In 2023, IWGIA continued to support partners at the local and national level to address GBV. For example, IWGIA and its partners gather data on the status of GBV in different communities and produce documentation, podcasts and films on the issue. This information gathering also includes collecting data on the impact of climate change on GBV. IWGIA and its partners further support Community-Based Organisations with small grants to address GBV in their communities. These small funds support activities such as community sensitisation on GBV, mentorship programmes for schoolgirls, and advocacy activities with local authorities. IWGIA also supports national Indigenous women’s networks, as well as regional Indigenous women’ platforms, to develop strategies, put in place governance systems in communities and conduct targeted advocacy.

¹ GBV includes sexual harassment, early marriage and pregnancy, discrimination of widows and women with disabilities, genital mutilation, domestic violence, trafficking, harassment and threats by military and police, trumped-up charges and arrests.

IWGIA and its partners supported 9 Indigenous women’s organisations and networks at the national level in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal, Peru and Tanzania, as well as at the regional level in Asia.

IWGIA’s partners took 40 actions to protest and act on GBV at the local and national level in 9 countries: Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal and the Philippines.
Indigenous women’s leadership in Kenya

In Kenya, with IWGIA’s support, the Indigenous women’s organisation Samburu Women Trust (SWT) conducted training for the Samburu County Women’s Caucus, consisting of 9 officially nominated Indigenous women sitting in the Samburu County Assembly, to enhance their advocacy strategies at county level. The training strengthened the capacity of the women’s caucus to advocate for the rights of women and girls in the County Assembly and acted as a platform for the women leaders to formulate effective strategies on how women can engage and increase women’s visibility in all leadership platforms at county level. SWT also organised a roundtable meeting between the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) and the Samburu County Women’s Caucus to discuss the challenges Indigenous women face in their leadership positions. The meeting was a key opportunity to link the Samburu County Women’s Caucus to the right authorities in order to flag and call attention to gender-unresponsive policies and actions within their county.

With IWGIA’s support, SWT also established the NAAPU Indigenous Women Fund back in 2021. In 2023, the fund helped three community-based women’s organisations to strengthen their advocacy against various forms of GBV in their communities in Laikipia, Samburu and West Pokot counties. In all, 20 grassroots women leaders were equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively monitor, document and report GBV and other human rights violations in their communities. The fund seeks to provide grants and seed capital to small and upcoming Indigenous women-led organisations that cannot easily access funding due to their marginalisation and the fact that they work in remote rural areas.

Providing safety and security for Indigenous women human rights defenders in the Philippines

In 2023, five Indigenous women human rights defenders from the Philippines received emergency assistance from the Cordillera Peoples Alliances (CPA) with IWGIA’s support. CPA provided them with temporary relocation and support for safe transport and communications after a trumped-up case of violations of International Humanitarian Law was filed against them. As their lawyers proceeded to respond to the case, it was necessary for them to seek sanctuary in order to avoid violent arrests and being unjustly detained. Two lawyers and three paralegal volunteers were mobilised to work on the case, which was finally dismissed. The five women have been subjected to several trumped-up charges since 2017. In addition, 10 more Indigenous women leaders who were facing threats in Benguet Province, along with five in Mountain Province, were able to use more secure communications and transport systems as they continued their work in different Indigenous communities.
In 2023, IWGIA continued to partner with CPA to support Indigenous Peoples who are facing numerous and continuous human rights violations by building the capacity of Indigenous Peoples’ Human Rights Defenders (IPHRDs) to respond to attacks on their organisations and individuals, including a strong focus on Indigenous women. Project activities included rapid response interventions to IPHRDs at risk, strengthening networks with pro bono lawyers, and strengthening the safety and security capacity of IPHRDs.

“Emergency support for Indigenous women human rights defenders is critical in mitigating the security risks that they face, especially under a repressive government. The physical and psychosocial safety nets provided enable them to continue making an impact in their respective communities. The support thus extends to the Indigenous communities and organisations that women work with, apart from their families.” - Sarah Bestang Dekdeken, Secretary General, CPA

Working towards the eradication of GBV in Ecuador

IWGIA supported the Pacari Institute for Indigenous Sciences to develop actions for the eradication of GBV, in coordination with local authorities from 17 different communities in the Andean region of Ecuador. IWGIA supported Pacari through the project “Minka Comunitaria Contra la Violencia de la Mujer” (Minka Community Against Women’s Violence), which contributed to defining strategies for the prevention of violence, protection of GBV victims, and sanctioning of those responsible, and the 17 communities have undertaken to promote these strategies. As women themselves are unaware of the full extent of their rights, the project also provided training to Indigenous women and other community members on individual and collective rights, as well as protection mechanisms in both the ordinary justice system and Indigenous justice system. Approximately, 245 community authorities, both women and men of different ages, were trained in understanding these rights and competencies.

“IWGIA has shown commitment in working for the rights of Indigenous Peoples who have been excluded throughout history, providing support for the implementation of projects that will enable life changes for Indigenous Peoples, eradicating violence against Indigenous women and their families, empowering the exercise of rights, and strengthening autonomy.” - Mariana Yumbya Yallico, Director of the Pacari Institute for Indigenous Sciences

Inclusion of Indigenous women’s rights at the UN Commission on the Status of Women

IWGIA works closely with the Danish and the European Union missions in New York on Indigenous women’s rights in the context of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This engagement includes dialogues between IWGIA and the missions on the draft conclusion of the session. In 2023 this resulted in a strong conclusion that included multiple references to Indigenous women.

Among other things it makes the following recommendation:

“Promote and protect the rights of all Indigenous women and girls by addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and barriers they face, ensuring access to quality and inclusive education, the Internet and digital services, and Indigenous women’s access to employment and economic
resources, including land and natural resources, and promoting their full and
effective participation in the economy and in decision-making processes
at all levels and in all areas, taking into account the free, prior and informed
consent of Indigenous Peoples and their ancestral knowledge and practices,
and recognizing their cultural, social, economic and political contributions and
priorities and the preservation, revitalization and promotion of their languages,
with the support of digital tools, as well as the transmission of their traditional,
scientific and technical knowledge.”

IWGIA participated in the CSW session and supported two Indigenous women
from Malaysia to attend. IWGIA made a written submission and delivered
an oral statement concerning the challenges Indigenous women face in
relation to lack of access to the digital space, lack of online literacy, lack
of disaggregated data and data sovereignty as well as online harassment
leading to off-line violence. However, we also highlighted the fact that
Indigenous women are active change agents in society, at the forefront
of promoting Indigenous Peoples’ rights and women’s rights and playing
an essential role in safeguarding and transmitting Indigenous knowledge,
tradition, culture and language.

In South Africa, IWGIA supported
the production of the documentary
“Keeping Hope Alive” produced by
the Elsie Vaalbooi Development
Organisation (EVDO). It highlights
the situation of Indigenous Khomani
San women in the Southern Kalahari
through the eyes of three Indigenous
women protagonists representing
three different age groups who talk about their lives, struggles and aspirations.
The main objective is to show the situation in the Southern Kalahari, highlighting
the daily socio-economic struggles of Indigenous women of all ages. By
amplifying women’s voices, EVDO hopes to create a space where people can
talk and share their stories more openly.

“Sanadoras de Memorias” brings together the
writings, reflections and hopes of 19 women
on prison violence, collective resistance, and
the alarming —and under-reported—rate of
disappearances of people that plagues Mexico.

“Pensar la Paz desde la Lucha de la Mujeres
Indígenas en México” examines peace and
feminist activism of Indigenous women in Mexico.
It is a reworked version of Alaide Vences Estudillo’s
doctoral thesis in Peace Studies and is the result
of multiple dialogues and knowledge sharing with
her colleagues from the National Coordinating
Committee of Indigenous Women (CONAMI).
Khomani San community meeting in Kalahari, Northern Cape province of South Africa.

Nikita Bulanin / IWGIA
2023 Finance

Where did the funds come from?*

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<tr>
<td>Private donations, memberships, other</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46,850</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did we spend the funds on?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>DKK (’000)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>7,329</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Defence and Defenders</td>
<td>6,120</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Governance</td>
<td>12,328</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Governance</td>
<td>16,376</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other / Cross cutting activities</td>
<td>4,277</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative expenses</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46,490</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where did the funds go?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>DKK (’000)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Activities &amp; International processes**</td>
<td>20,370</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>6,078</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>5,424</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>14,558</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46,430</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Cash income only

** Includes projects and work with partners on the ground in multiple countries, linking up to global activities and processes, such as our work with the Indigenous Navigator, which includes direct grants to partners and communities based on identified needs through that project.
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• our individual donors for their generous donations; and
• our project and institutional donors listed below for their financial support.