



# IWGIA STRATEGY 2021-2025

Documenting • Advocating • Empowering





Indigenous community standing up for their rights in India. CREDIT: Christian Erni / IWGIA

# INTRODUCTION

IWGIA advocates for the recognition, promotion and protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights. Alongside partners and allies, IWGIA has contributed to major achievements in the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights, such as the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007.

Despite this recognition and other significant successes, Indigenous Peoples today, in all parts of the world, are still fighting discrimination and targeted violence, struggling against a shrinking civic space, lacking recognition of their rights as peoples, and suffering from land dispossession, evictions and the negative consequences of climate change and conservation efforts. Indigenous Peoples are also disproportionately suffering the effects of COVID-19 and its consequences, including increased repression by states that are using the pandemic as a way to enact laws that further encroach on their rights. For Indigenous Peoples, the long-term consequences of the pandemic may be devastating.

This Institutional Strategy analyses and exposes these challenges in order to effectively address them. It outlines IWGIA's vision, mission and core ambitions for the next five years, describing our pathway to fostering lasting change. Our pathway places our partners at the very centre and outlines our three core areas of work: documenting, advocating and empowering – what we call our Triangle of Change. The Institutional Strategy further outlines our implementation priorities, which specifically address the issues facing Indigenous Peoples, through our

four interrelated thematic programme areas: (1) climate change; (2) land defence and defenders; (3) territorial governance; and (4) global governance. These four areas are augmented by three cross-cutting elements: (1) our Small Grants Facility; (2) a focus on Indigenous women; and (3), data generation and analysis.

This strategy is accompanied by a Key Implementation Plan that identifies the specific outcomes and outputs we want to achieve, as well as indicators to measure our success. IWGIA's Board monitors our progress in the Institutional Strategy and Key Implementation Plan through yearly Operational Plans. This strategy will be reviewed in 2023 in order to adjust our actions and be able to reach our goals.

This strategy was approved by IWGIA's Board on 29 October 2020 and replaces IWGIA's Institutional Strategy 2017 – 2020.

**IWGIA will continue to build long-term partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and is committed to continuing to stand with and behind the Indigenous Peoples' movement and our partners.**

# WHO WE ARE

IWGIA is a non-governmental human rights organisation promoting, protecting and defending Indigenous Peoples' collective and individual rights. We have supported our partners in this fight for more than 50 years. We work through a global network of Indigenous Peoples' organisations and international human rights bodies. We promote recognition, respect and implementation of Indigenous Peoples' rights, including the right to self-determination by virtue of which they can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

## Our Vision

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

## Our Mission

We promote, protect and defend Indigenous Peoples' rights.

## Our core ambition for the next five years

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

## Our institutional values:

### ***Trust, honesty and respect***

Indigenous Peoples are the experts on their own lives and issues. We recognise this unique expertise and seek to build our knowledge through our engagement and partnership with Indigenous Peoples. IWGIA respects the priorities of Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of their right to self-determination. We believe that through intercultural dialogue we develop a deeper understanding of the diverse perspectives and practices of Indigenous Peoples. Honesty, engagement and openness guide our work to ensure credibility and build trust.

### ***Integrity and transparency***

Our work is based upon professional expertise and in-depth knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and their cultures. We encourage diversity of experience, culture, ideas and opinions among our staff and partners. We seek to ensure that we all take responsibility and create opportunities to help each other reach our fullest potential. We foster a diverse, inclusive and safe environment.

### ***Accountability***

We act responsibly and hold ourselves accountable for our decisions, actions and their consequences. All our work is based on full financial accountability and transparency.

### ***Independence***

Our work is unbiased and uncompromised by partisan politics, institutional or personal allegiances, and our agenda is not determined by sources of financial support. We do not interfere with Indigenous Peoples' diverse political stands.

### ***Urgency***

We believe in responding swiftly, decisively and strategically to opportunities and challenges. We work on issues where we, together with our partners, can make a unique difference and contribute to significant human rights improvements.

# WHY SUPPORT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

Indigenous Peoples make up approximately 6% of the world's population, or around 476 million people worldwide. Indigenous Peoples and their territories are estimated to be protecting and defending over 80% of the world's biodiversity. More than 5,000 distinct Indigenous communities are believed to exist, speaking some 4,000 different languages and living in more than 90 countries (UN, 2009).<sup>1</sup> Despite the richness of their culture, and of their land, and despite the crucial role Indigenous Peoples play in protecting these, they make up more than 15% of the world's extreme poor.<sup>2</sup>



President Wrays Perez Ramirez speaking at the General Assembly of the Wampis Nation, Soledad community.  
CREDIT: Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA

The term "Indigenous Peoples" is a common denominator for distinct peoples who, through historical processes, have been marginalised and denied their right to control their own development. Considering the diversity of Indigenous Peoples, an official definition of "Indigenous Peoples" has not been adopted by the UN system. Instead, a working definition has been accepted under international law to include the following criteria: self-identification as Indigenous Peoples; historical continuity; strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; distinct social, economic or political systems; distinct language, culture and beliefs; form non-dominant groups of society; and are resolved to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.

Indigenous Peoples' rights are recognised in ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples,

established in 1989, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. The adoption of the UNDRIP was an historical achievement in the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights at the international level.

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are not left behind and that their rights are respected and protected. In turn, implementation of the 17 ambitious goals can also benefit from Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and practices.

Despite these positive developments at the international level, the human rights situation of Indigenous Peoples at the national and local level remains alarming, with several critical trends not only continuing but worsening in many countries. In recent years, Indigenous Peoples

1. 2009. State of the world's indigenous peoples. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (New York).  
2. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_735607.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf);

have been facing major setbacks in respect of their fundamental rights. The rise of autocratic and populist leaders, and a shrinking civic space for organisations addressing human rights issues, combined with existential threats from state and corporate actors – often in the form of large development projects, extractive industries and expansion of national parks and protected areas – continues to pose increased risks to the well-being, land tenure security and survival of Indigenous Peoples throughout the world. This also places the lives of their leaders and representatives in jeopardy. Indigenous women face systematic discrimination, sexual harassment and violence, especially in militarised areas, where no one is held to account for the atrocities committed against them. Many Indigenous Peoples are also impacted by illegal activities on their lands, such as illicit drug trafficking, logging and mining, and the impunity the perpetrators enjoy. Climate change further exacerbates violations of Indigenous Peoples' land and autonomy rights and, in some cases, their cultural and physical survival, which is often compounded by the negative impacts of mitigation and adaptation measures.

Indigenous Peoples experience ever increasing challenges in the defence of their right to land, territories and natural resources, as they live on lands with some of the highest reserves of fossil fuels, minerals and forests. Confronted with growing global demand for natural resources, increased deforestation, and so-called green solutions to global climate change and biodiversity loss – including conservation efforts – Indigenous Peoples' rights to own and control their own lands and resources and to determine their own futures are significantly constrained and often completely denied. As they fight to defend their lands, they are labelled an obstacle to development or progress and face oppression, something that has become increasingly visible and violent, with states now frequently resorting to the use of irregular justice systems and security apparatuses to respond to Indigenous Peoples' social mobilisation.

This critical situation is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, which is disproportionately affecting Indigenous Peoples and acts as a "threat multiplier" compounding the effects of systemic and daily acts of discrimination on Indigenous Peoples' fundamental human rights and freedoms. Pervasive structural violence – such as social marginalisation, restricted access to natural resources and a lack of political recognition – contributes to the life-threatening risks Indigenous communities face across the world. Insufficient access to basic

health care services, sanitation and limited Internet for online education platforms are some of the many structural problems impacting Indigenous communities' ability to cope with this pandemic. Lockdown measures and restrictions on freedom of movement have negatively affected Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders (IPHRED). They are no longer able to monitor the situation in their areas, document violations, call on their support networks, access the judicial system, mobilise negatively affected communities or organise protests.

As national economies recover from COVID-19, we expect to see an increase in aggressive land grabbing on Indigenous Peoples' territories and the signing of concessions for extractive industries without their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Without secure tenure, Indigenous Peoples' territories are at increased risk of being targeted for their rich natural resources as governments look to cushion the looming global economic recession and unscrupulous actors use this as justification for violating Indigenous Peoples' land rights. Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic may well lead to a decline in the enforcement of rights, increased land grabbing and the criminalisation of Indigenous Peoples fighting for their fundamental rights to the lands, territories and resources they steward. Indigenous Peoples will need to protect themselves from the pandemic itself and these related threats, and will also need to recover once the pandemic subsides. When Indigenous Peoples are free to exercise their right to self-determination and autonomy, they have shown their tenacity in creating culturally appropriate and community-led responses to many crises. With the right support and recognition of their rights, there is no reason why the same should not be the case for COVID-19.

Indigenous Peoples have managed their lands, territories and natural resources sustainably and continue to do so. Their knowledge of biodiversity and the environment is crucial for the world community. Respect for Indigenous territorial governance and autonomy provides the basis for self-determined development, which not only guarantees respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights but can contribute to resolving the global environmental crisis in which we all find ourselves.

It is therefore important, now more than ever, to work in solidarity with and support of Indigenous Peoples and to fight for respect, promotion and effective implementation of Indigenous Peoples' internationally recognised rights at national and local level.

# DOCUMENTING, ADVOCATING, EMPOWERING: OUR TRIANGLE OF CHANGE

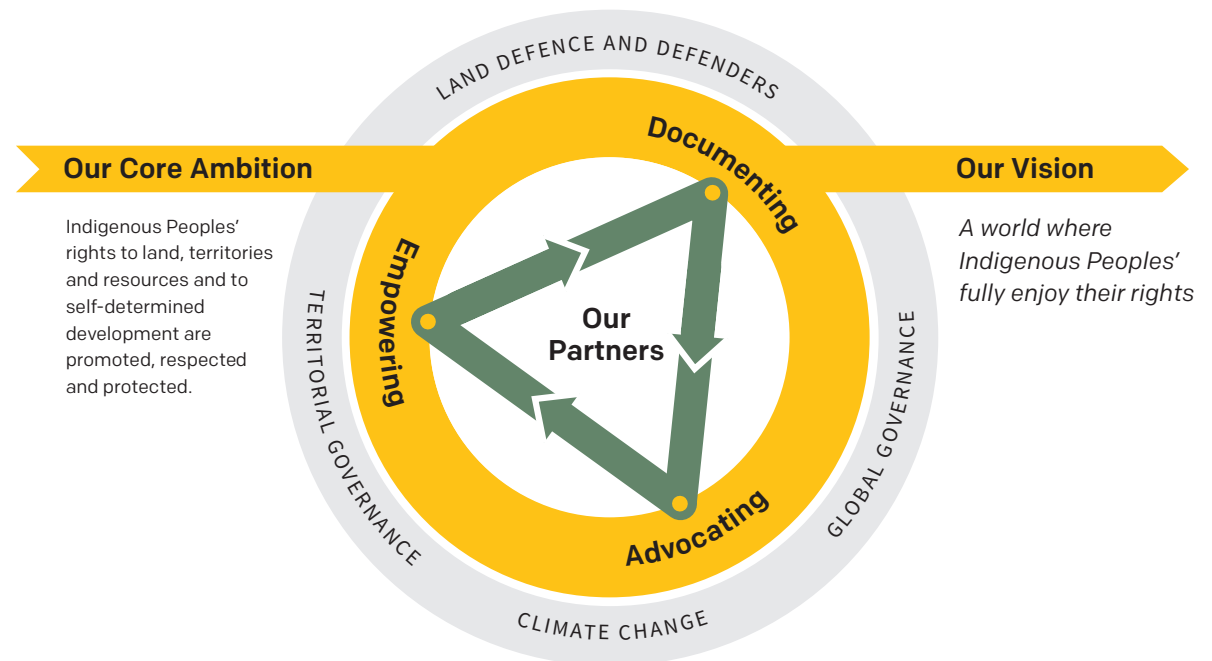
IWGIA is a human rights organisation that promotes, protects and defends Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination. We believe that Indigenous Peoples as rights holders are powerful agents of change. Our partnership with their organisations and institutions is at the centre of all our work. Together with allies, and in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, our core ambition for the next five years is that Indigenous Peoples' rights to land, territories and resources and their self-determined development are promoted, respected and protected.

CREDIT: Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA

**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, thus contributing to knowledge and awareness of their circumstances and promoting respect for their individual and collective rights;
- **Advocating** for change from decision-makers at local, regional and international levels, including active engagement in international networks; and
- **Empowering** Indigenous Peoples' own organisations to act in order to claim and exercise their rights and to amplify the Indigenous Peoples' movements at national, regional and local levels.

We implement four focused and results-driven thematic programmes to drive change with and for our partners.



# HOW WE IMPLEMENT CHANGE: STRATEGIC THEMATIC APPROACH

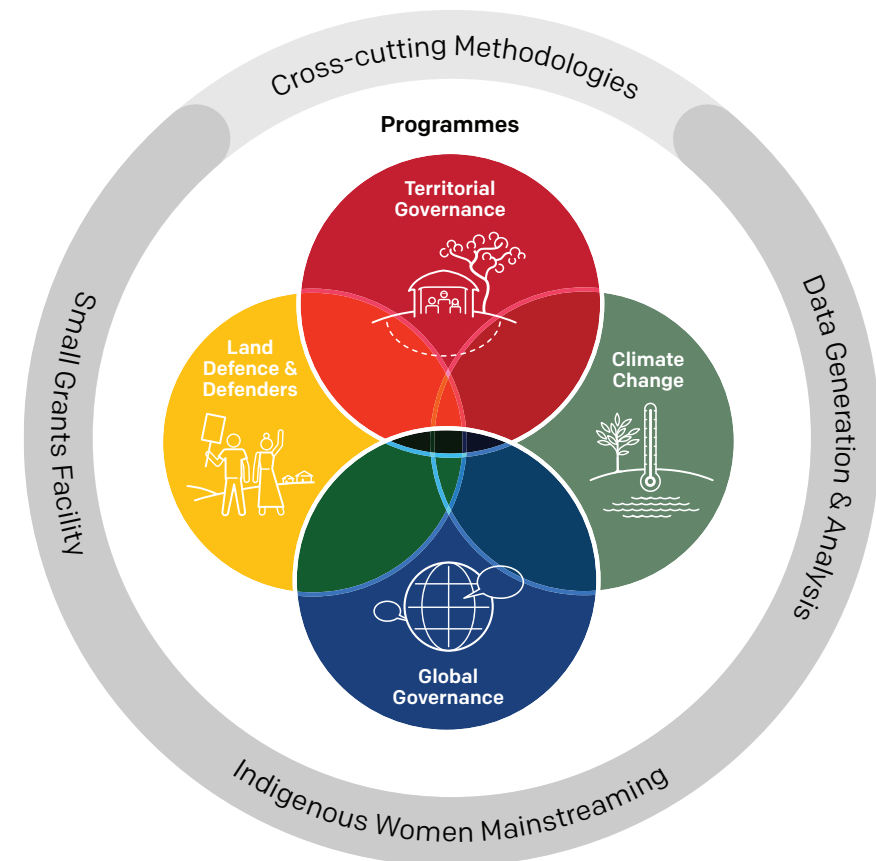
Despite being recognised for their environmental stewardship, Indigenous Peoples are not only disproportionately affected by climate change, they are also increasingly negatively impacted by top-down mitigation and adaptation efforts on their lands and territories. IWGIA's **Climate Change** programme strives to ensure that the impact of climate change and climate action on Indigenous Peoples' rights is promptly addressed and remedied, while simultaneously guaranteeing that Indigenous Peoples themselves are acknowledged and consulted as key actors in realising their rights and contributors to climate change solutions through their knowledge.

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 Defenders** programme leverages Indigenous Peoples' efforts to safely and securely claim and exercise their rights to land, territories and natural resources at national, regional and international levels.

Indigenous territorial self-government or autonomy is an exercise in self-determination. IWGIA's **Territorial Governance** programme reinforces the creation and consolidation of Indigenous self-governance and autonomy. It promotes dialogue with national authorities and international human rights mechanisms for the recognition of Indigenous governments and supports their articulation of diverse autonomous experiences.

Indigenous Peoples' rights have been recognised at the international level. However, for Indigenous Peoples' rights to be respected and protected, they must be recognised and operationalised at national and local levels. IWGIA's **Global Governance** programme strengthens global-to-local linkages between national and international processes 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, enabling them to seek redress. This programme also strengthens Indigenous Peoples' participation in and contribution to relevant global decision-making processes, such as implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

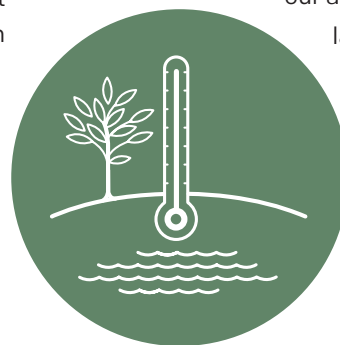


# IWGIA'S THEMATIC PROGRAMMES: CLIMATE CHANGE

**Context:** Armed with millennia-old knowledge of living in harmony with nature, Indigenous Peoples are stewards of the environment. Their vast territories preserve 80% of the planet's remaining biodiversity and at least 24% of carbon stored above ground in the world's tropical forests. Despite their environmental stewardship, Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately affected by climate change due to such ramifications as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, droughts, forest fires and coastal erosion. Furthermore, they are increasingly negatively impacted by top-down climate actions on their lands and territories.

For too long, the important voices of Indigenous Peoples have not been heard and their land, territory and resource rights have been ignored at international fora where vital decisions are taken regarding the future of our planet. In recent years, this has started to change and Indigenous Peoples have achieved increasing recognition for the vital role played by their world views, values, knowledge and, above all, customary laws and governance systems in ensuring the sustainable use and management of their land, territories and resources. In fact, an emerging consensus recognises that respecting Indigenous Peoples' rights is one of the most effective means in the fight against climate change. Despite this, Indigenous Peoples' rights continue to be violated in global climate action.

In recognition of these challenges, IWGIA's climate change work strives to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' rights are respected in climate action, further climate change impacts are avoided and Indigenous Peoples themselves are respected as key actors in claiming their rights and as key contributors of climate solutions, implementing their vast knowledge of biodiversity and sustainable nature resource management. Our focus for the next five years will primarily be on contributing to, advising and supporting Indigenous Peoples' advocacy in the following three areas: at the national level in targeted countries, at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and within the Green Climate Fund (GCF).



## STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS (2021-2025)

**Documenting:** We will analyse, document and publicise the contributions Indigenous Peoples' make in the fight against climate change, as well as the impact climate change has on Indigenous women, men and youth. We will also document and publicise violations of their rights, including violations to their lands, territories and resources, due to top-down mitigation and adaptation efforts. Our publications, documentary films and podcasts will be used in our advocacy work – disseminated in English, Spanish and Indigenous languages – to hold violators to account.

**Advocating:** At the UNFCCC, we will focus on the full and effective operationalisation of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform and its Facilitative Working Group. We will support the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change and their advocacy in key negotiations and processes, including the Global Stocktake in 2023. Likewise, within the GCF, we will advance operationalisation of the Indigenous Peoples' Advocacy Group, advocate for full compliance with the Indigenous Peoples' Policy and use, and monitor the effectiveness of, the Independent Redress Mechanism.

**Empowering:** We will collaborate with our partners for their full and effective participation in national climate policy formulation and implementation. We will stand alongside our partners as they advocate for, and monitor the compliance of, Indigenous Peoples' rights safeguards in the implementation of states' nationally-determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, as well as in the implementation of GCF-funded projects. Based on our extensive experience from the UNFCCC, we will amplify and support our partners' advocacy for the establishment of local and national Indigenous Peoples' climate platforms.

# LAND DEFENCE AND DEFENDERS

**Context:** Indigenous Peoples the world over are paying a high price for decades of unsustainable development that continues to this day. The global rush for economic growth has led to increased demand for land and natural resources, with Indigenous Peoples' land being a primary target.

As a result, some Indigenous Peoples are at risk of losing their remaining lands and territories, and suffering all the social, economic and cultural threats and losses that will inevitably follow. Land dispossession will lead to the loss of Indigenous Peoples' traditional livelihood practices and the inter-generational transfer of Indigenous knowledge, and will undermine their social organisation, traditional institutions and cultural and spiritual practices; all of which can cause poverty, food insecurity, social disintegration and loss of identity and human dignity.

The stigmatisation of Indigenous Peoples and criminalisation of their activities reflects a shrinking democratic space in far too many states. An increasing number of attacks by extractive companies and other developers, including conservationists and green investment initiatives, are being detected against defenders of lands and forests. These defenders are protecting biodiversity-rich ecosystems that have been the homes of their people since time immemorial. Land grabbing and invasions lead to mass forced evictions of Indigenous Peoples from their traditional lands and territories, as well as other gross human rights violations. State and corporate actors do not recognise or respect the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Instead, Indigenous dissent is used to legitimise violence, killings, and impunity.

While these trends are highly worrying, there are also windows of opportunity for safeguarding land tenure security emerging in some countries in the form of new laws and policies that Indigenous Peoples can use.

The world has become a more dangerous place for human rights defenders. IWGIA's support for partners on the ground who are mobilising and protesting the

injustice they face is now more important than ever. We will strengthen our focus on providing secure and safe ways to continue working, building support and solidarity networks, providing adequate training and legal support, and facilitating urgent responses to rights defenders at risk in order to address the threats.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS (2021-2025)

**Documenting:** We will increase and consolidate efforts to get land rights and related human rights violations exposed and denounced at all levels – local, national, and international. This will be done through regular monitoring and fact-finding missions and rigorous documentation through such interventions as urgent alerts, briefing papers, video documentaries, radio reports and human rights reports. Over the next five years, we will place particular emphasis on documenting and analysing the root causes of the violations in order to understand and be better equipped to address them.

**Advocating:** We will work with Indigenous Peoples, international human rights mechanisms and alliances to identify duty-bearers, including the home states of corporations, the corporations and states themselves, and the financial actors investing in them. We will engage in and support efforts to hold duty-bearers accountable, demand that violations are stopped and endeavour to ensure that effective redress and protection measures are put in place.

**Empowering:** We will support Indigenous communities (women, men and youth) in their efforts to defend their land rights and to achieve land tenure security. Over the next five years, we will invest additional focus in improving the security of Indigenous Peoples, especially those who actively engage in the defence of their rights and natural resources and are directly addressing the shrinking civic space that many of our partners are increasingly experiencing.



# TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE

**Context:** The aspiration of Indigenous Peoples to exercise their right to autonomy fuels many of their present-day political struggles and, in some countries, Indigenous autonomies have been recognised by the state, especially in the Arctic region and Latin America.

A number of states have also transformed their national legislation to accommodate Indigenous Peoples' right to territorial autonomy. However, this change has often been undermined in practice by the dynamics of neoliberal economic globalisation, in particular through land dispossession by extractive companies. In most countries, important challenges still need to be addressed before Indigenous Peoples can exercise their right to self-governance.

Asserting autonomy is a social, economic, cultural and political process that goes beyond the recognition and exercise of rights within a territorially defined space. It implies a relationship of equality with outside actors and, above all, it provides the basis for the sociocultural and political survival of Indigenous Peoples as peoples with self-determination. This political process is interrelated with all of the major challenges facing Indigenous Peoples, from food resilience to rural to urban migration to the exercise of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in accordance with community protocols and practices. Addressing these and other challenges, such as those that will arise as a result of the COVID-19 context, is only possible if Indigenous autonomy is strengthened.

The development of autonomous FPIC protocols or policies is one central pillar of exercising autonomy and provides external actors with culturally appropriate rules for rights-based engagement with Indigenous Peoples. Developed by Indigenous Peoples themselves, these protocols are one important manifestation of their right to self-determination and autonomy. We will promote and support the development of such protocols throughout Latin America and beyond.

The main focus of our work over the next five years will be to strengthen Indigenous governments, providing technical assistance, promoting discussions on different aspects of the implementation of autonomies and facilitating the exchange of experiences between regions and Indigenous Peoples. We will place particular emphasis on the participation of Indigenous youth, including addressing the consequences of growing migration (especially of young people) to urban centres.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS (2021-2025)



**Documenting:** We will place special emphasis on the systematisation and dissemination of experiences of autonomy. We will analyse the processes of asserting autonomy, involving different segments of the Indigenous population, academia and the general public, and this will be documented through a range of communication media, including books, digital publications, video and radio programmes, and social media.

**Advocating:** IWGIA will support advocacy efforts to educate the general public about experiences of Indigenous governments, influence local and national policy makers and public servants as well as international institutions, and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships to operationalise Indigenous visions for development and territorial self-governance and autonomy. We will engage international human rights mechanisms in promoting the right to autonomy and its realisation in practice.

**Empowering:** We will promote the establishment of territorial governance by providing support to organisational strengthening and technical assistance, and by facilitating the exchange of experiences between regions and Indigenous Peoples aimed at discussing visions and concrete modalities. We will also focus on the participation of young people in this process.

# GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

**Context:** At the international level, Indigenous Peoples' right to participate in decision-making processes in relation to issues that have a direct impact on their lives and future continues to be an uphill battle, including facing political and procedural barriers to their effective participation.

A considerable number of UN organisations and other multilateral institutions consider Indigenous Peoples' rights as a marginal issue within their broader mandate. Many of the policies and programmes that directly affect Indigenous Peoples' rights and well-being are developed and implemented without much regard for their rights or the considerations of international human rights standards regarding Indigenous Peoples.

There is therefore a pressing need to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' voices continue to be heard and that the international community pays particular attention to their situation. It is also crucial that Indigenous Peoples continue to be able to effectively use the international human rights system to seek redress for human rights violations, especially today, in a COVID-19 world, where the pandemic does not allow for physical meetings that provide space for informal access to decision-makers, and which may limit opportunities for influence.

Although IWGIA has worked extensively for decades to strengthen the focus of international bodies on Indigenous Peoples' rights, there is still more to do. While this important work will continue, IWGIA's global governance also seeks to address one of the biggest challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples: ensuring respect and protection of their rights at the national level. There is a lack of accountability on the part of many states for their international human rights obligations and commitments with regard to Indigenous Peoples' rights, including their systematic disregard of recommendations made by international and regional human rights institutions and mechanisms.

We believe that more decisive action is urgently needed to ensure accountability of states with regard to their international human rights obligations and commitments on Indigenous Peoples' rights. We will strengthen our efforts to promote multi-stakeholder engagement initiatives at national, regional and

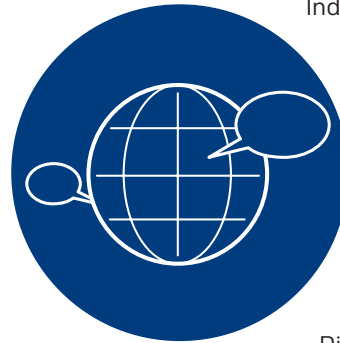
international levels aimed at monitoring and following up on recommendations made by international and regional human rights mechanisms.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS (2021-2025)

**Documenting:** To enhance Indigenous Peoples' access to justice and redress for violations of their rights, we will produce evidence-based human rights documentation and reports for submission to international and regional human rights mechanisms. The documentation produced will also be a key tool for Indigenous Peoples to enhance their engagement in and contribution to global decision-making processes, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goal monitoring, Indigenous women's rights and climate action.

**Advocating:** We will undertake advocacy initiatives alongside our partners and with our allies at the national, regional and international level, especially at UN human rights bodies' and mechanisms' events, as well as those of regional human rights institutions, such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. We will apply a "toolbox approach" in order to support Indigenous partners in using a pool of strategic international human rights mechanisms and global processes to vindicate their rights, aimed at increasing state accountability for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights. We will also seek more decisive action to ensure Indigenous Peoples are not left behind in the review and implementation of the SDGs by ensuring their inclusion in and contribution to the development of national action plans, state reviews and regional strategies.

**Empowering:** We will enhance the capacity and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples to engage in global decision-making processes that affect their lives and future and to effectively use human rights mechanisms to seek redress for human rights violations. Central to this is demanding and facilitating the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples at all levels of decision-making that affect their rights and interests.

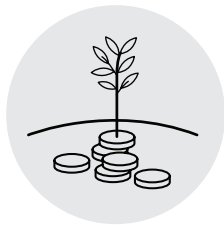


# CROSS-CUTTING METHODOLOGIES

We implement three cross-cutting and integrated methodologies to further strengthen our four thematic programmes and ensure we take a bottom-up approach. We do so by building flexibility within our programming, ensuring we apply a focus on Indigenous women in all our work and investing in data generation and analysis to enhance our monitoring tools.

Maasai women from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania.  
CREDIT: Marianne Wiben Jensen / IWGIA

## SMALL GRANTS FACILITY

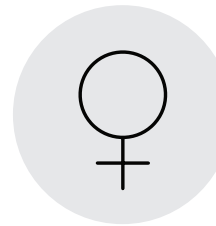


We operate a Small Grants Facility (SGF), which is a cornerstone of our *modus operandi*. The objective of the SGF is to provide an instrument that allows us to respond flexibly to the needs and opportunities defined by Indigenous Peoples' organisations. This allows us to work in a bottom-up, partner-driven way, reacting swiftly and flexibly to urgent needs on the ground.

SGF-supported projects fall within our overall goals and priorities as spelled out in this Institutional Strategy, with an overarching focus on strengthening Indigenous Peoples' rights to land, territories and natural resources and to self-determined development. In line with our priorities, they will also have a focus on the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth.

In the next five years, IWGIA will grow and expand the SGF by attracting more partners and financial resources to bolster our support to Indigenous organisations and movements on the ground.

## INDIGENOUS WOMEN MAINSTREAMING



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 the targets of multiple forms of violence.

In the next five years, we will provide assistance and support to projects directly developed and implemented by Indigenous women's organisations that 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 will 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, access to justice and remedies.

Additionally, we will, through our Indigenous Navigator project, contribute to the development of comprehensive and disaggregated data on violence and discrimination against Indigenous women, including their access to justice and to economic, social and cultural rights, as well as other quantitative and qualitative information that may be relevant to ensure their human rights.

We will also develop methodological tools to ensure that Indigenous women are part of all our projects and programmes. To achieve this, we will carry out a gender audit, update our gender policy and ensure all our partners are aware of and sensitised to the inclusion of Indigenous women.

## DATA GENERATION AND ANALYSIS



The world lacks the full picture of the marginalisation and discrimination against Indigenous Peoples due to a lack of disaggregated data. Indigenous Peoples are therefore often left behind when general development trends in a country do not take into consideration their unique socio-economic and political circumstances. As the human rights-based approach to development has shown, if there is no disaggregated data on Indigenous Peoples, they will remain invisible, their rights will continue to be disregarded in the context of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and they will be left behind.

IWGIA engages with data on multiple levels. More than simply generating data, IWGIA shares critical data, ensures data quality is preserved – building trust

and legitimacy – and drives discourse forward on data standards in relation to Indigenous Data Sovereignty. These multiple levels of data generation and management allow us to produce critical documentation work that drives forward our advocacy and to develop monitoring frameworks that can better understand and recognise the implementation gap in relation to Indigenous Peoples' rights, as guaranteed by international mechanisms. Such uses can be seen in the Indigenous Navigator initiative, which directly addresses the implementation gap through the collection and use of data in advocacy efforts and project design for Indigenous communities and organisations. The initiative also focuses on the role of data at the local level and how it can serve to empower Indigenous communities through, for example, environmental monitoring by communities or determining their own locally and culturally appropriate well-being indicators.

By ensuring that our partners have access to raw data and the ability to produce, interpret and refine it into usable outputs, IWGIA is making certain that data becomes more than just numbers or characters, and instead evolves into a meaningful tool for change.

IWGIA aims to strengthen our capacity to collect, analyse and communicate data so that we are better positioned to provide focused, specific support to our global network while fortifying international and global advocacy efforts that rely on quantitative and qualitative analysis. By 2025, we aim to increase our data capacity for monitoring, reporting and evaluation in our various initiatives and products, including The Indigenous World and Indigenous Navigator.

# OUR INSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES

To us, everything begins with partnerships. We consider this to be one of our main assets.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES AT THE FOREFRONT

Over its more than 50-year history, IWGIA has been able to build and develop unique, long-standing partnerships with Indigenous Peoples' organisations and networks from all seven Indigenous regions.

Our partnerships are based on respect for Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination and a conviction that Indigenous Peoples are the most powerful agents of change. As we are a non-indigenous organisation, our legitimacy depends on what value we add to the realisation of Indigenous Peoples' own aspirations. Everything we do is with and in support of Indigenous Peoples.

Our unique partnerships with a diverse number of projects and strategic partners, including Indigenous organisations in developed and developing countries, UN agencies, international and regional human rights institutions, civil society organisations and donors, is one of IWGIA's main assets. 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 can play a global, facilitative role for Indigenous Peoples.

IWGIA's project partners are first and foremost Indigenous Peoples' own organisations. IWGIA-supported activities are mainly designed and implemented by Indigenous Peoples' organisations themselves. An important criterion for IWGIA's choice of partners is that they are not only rooted in their Indigenous communities but are also recognised as the legitimate representatives of and advocates for those communities.

Indigenous youth preparing for a radio programme on Radio Wampis, Soledad community.  
CREDIT: Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA



IWGIA's work with partners also goes beyond specific country support. We document and share best practices across the regions and support the building of a global movement by allying with international Indigenous Peoples' organisations and relevant institutions. For example, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights is today the main platform for Indigenous Peoples' rights in Africa and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is a main player for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the Americas, including the rights of Indigenous women. IWGIA has given consistent support to such mechanisms and will continue to do so in order to further strengthen their role in the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

At the global level, strategic partnerships and alliances built with Nordic governments, particularly Denmark and Norway, have contributed to ground-breaking achievements in the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights. These are manifested in several ways, including the establishment of the three UN Mechanisms dealing with Indigenous Peoples' issues, adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and, more recently, adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. A strategic partnership with these countries is crucial for IWGIA to support the Indigenous movement.

## OUR HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

IWGIA sees a human rights-based approach as both a means and an end in its support to Indigenous Peoples as distinct peoples.

Our strategies and programmes are therefore framed and informed at all stages by international human rights standards. We deem the various problems facing Indigenous Peoples to stem from the lack of implementation and respect of their collective rights, including their right to determine their own political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (right to self-determination). Indigenous Peoples are rights holders and not merely stakeholders and, as such, have undisputed rights they can claim.

We are firmly committed to promoting recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples' internationally recognised rights. We work with the full range of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, placing special emphasis on the collective aspects of these rights while also recognising the importance of Indigenous people's individual rights.

We place particular focus on groups of Indigenous Peoples who are especially vulnerable to discrimination and human rights violations. However, we also focus on particularly vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, within Indigenous communities.

## FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL AND BACK TO LOCAL: OUR MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

IWGIA works on the ground with local Indigenous communities and their organisations, with governments and other stakeholders at the national level, with relevant regional human rights mechanisms and via the UN system and related bodies internationally.

We take our point of departure in local needs and ownership and facilitate access and outreach to regional and international platforms. We then provide an avenue to bring gains achieved at the regional and international levels back down to Indigenous communities at the local level. This approach enables us to address the root causes of human rights violations and achieve genuine and sustainable solutions based on Indigenous Peoples' own visions and aspirations.

Through this approach, we promote Indigenous Peoples' capacity to act by supporting their organisations and connecting them in order to strengthen global solidarity and action.

## ADAPTABILITY, AGILITY, FLEXIBILITY

IWGIA combines long-term, consistent efforts with an eye to adaptability and agility in our work as the reality for Indigenous Peoples and ourselves is such that situations change and problems arise often at a moment's notice, which requires us to be swift in our response. While recognising the need for strategic directions and priorities, IWGIA therefore also maintains its flexible approach as a cornerstone of our working methods in order to effectively address unpredictable challenges.

This important characteristic of our work is most noticeable when we document human rights violations or adapt our support to project partners because Indigenous Peoples are experiencing urgent, sometimes life-threatening, human rights violations. It is also noticeable when we respond to the onset of rapid crises, evidenced most recently by our swift and ongoing response to and support of partners during the COVID-19 pandemic and its ever-changing aftermath.

# ENGAGEMENT: ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

An essential part of IWGIA's work hinges on our engagement efforts, which cut across all our programming and organisational work. With our Triangle of Change at its foundation, our engagement encompasses documentation, communication, networking and fundraising. These elements allow us to communicate the reality and situation of Indigenous Peoples' broadly, fully and effectively and engage numerous audiences – current and new – in order to raise awareness and inspire them to drive change for the promotion, protection and defence of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

IWGIA is recognised as a leading knowledge centre through our documentation of Indigenous Peoples' issues and human rights violations, conducted in collaboration with Indigenous people and a broad network of committed individuals. This includes our one-of-a-kind, flagship annual publication – The Indigenous World – which is a global documentation tool that has been used for decades in tracking the situation of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. We have become a trusted partner with Indigenous organisations, a go-to destination for academics, researchers and journalists, and a valuable resource for decision-makers, legal experts and activists fighting for the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Our communications work seeks to elevate the voices, actions and struggle of Indigenous Peoples; inform and influence policy processes and decisions; and promote and position IWGIA as the go-to organisation for Indigenous Peoples' rights. We do this, in part, by communicating broadly in two main institutional languages: English and Spanish. We also communicate in Danish on a limited level to engage with and influence Danish civil society networks, decision-makers, Danish politicians and the general public. We also support partners in developing culturally appropriate communication interventions for Indigenous communities in their own languages.

IWGIA's broad engagement work would not be possible without our extensive and dedicated network, which includes our partners, alliances and members who tirelessly and often voluntarily share invaluable advice, collaborate with us



Indigenous women discussing forest rights in Chiang Mai province, Thailand.  
CREDIT: I/PF

on interventions and lend their support as partners in change, promoting the fight for Indigenous Peoples' rights.

We have traditionally been supported by institutional donors, such as governments, multilateral agencies and private foundations, who have retained a high level of confidence in our capacity to achieve our vision demonstrated by years-long support through numerous grant renewals.

However, today's landscape for civil society organisations – particularly those focusing on human rights – is deteriorating rapidly. This, coupled with the lasting consequences of COVID-19, requires organisations like IWGIA to be even more of a watchdog as human rights violations increase, and to quickly adapt and be innovative in how we approach donors and strategic partners to support our work.

IWGIA's engagement ambitions for 2021-2025 are to:

- expand and solidify IWGIA's reputation as the go-to knowledge centre on the situation of Indigenous Peoples' rights;
- implement innovative and effective communications interventions to support our partners, including working more with Indigenous youth and developing stronger visual communication elements;
- strengthen our organisational reputation, presence and value to be a more visible ally to Indigenous Peoples by deepening and broadening our audiences and network, including increased collaboration with governments, beginning with Nordic governments, on joint interventions and opportunities for fundraising and systemic change; and
- diversify our donor portfolio through innovative initiatives aimed at increasing organisational sustainability.

# IWGIA'S ORGANISATIONAL AMBITIONS 2021 – 2025

## THE WORLD WE WORK IN

Indigenous Peoples continue to fight for their rights to land, territories and resources, and self-determined development in an uphill battle exacerbated by an exponentially intensifying global land rush and atrophying democratic space. Securing the rights of Indigenous Peoples therefore has to be IWGIA's core ambition for the next five years.

This ambition is intrinsic to all our work and runs like a backbone through our programming and engagement. We will not only address and stress the importance of ensuring Indigenous Peoples' rights can be fully respected and realised but will also stand up and speak out when these rights are rolled back, ignored or simply put on paper without any real action behind them. We will promote self-determined pathways to exercise these rights and contextualise this work through our four thematic programmes within regional, national and local contexts.

We will consequently expand our strength as a knowledge centre and expertise network to elevate and galvanise Indigenous voices and leverage evidence to drive change for the human rights situation of Indigenous Peoples.

We will ensure strong, professional and trustworthy analysis that provides relevant and timely inputs to relevant global discussions and developments for maximum support to and in collaboration with our partners.

Over the next five years, we will harness the strength, ingenuity and energy of youth, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, as their engagement in social issues and movements is crucial to the future sustainability of Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous societies.



2019 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (UN Headquarters NY, July 2019).  
CREDIT: Lola García-Alix / IWGIA

Since its beginning, IWGIA has worked in close collaboration with Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic region. Our work in Denmark, and Europe more broadly, will build on cooperation with Indigenous Peoples in Greenland and Sápmi and we will ensure that our strategies and advocacy are aligned. Being based in Denmark provides us with a unique opportunity to work together with one of the countries considered to be a “friend of Indigenous Peoples”. We will therefore deepen and increase our engagement with Denmark and other Nordic countries, providing more targeted information to governments and politicians in the Nordic regions. However, we will not stop there. We will implement the same strategy with the European Union and UN agencies to raise awareness, advocate for change and grow IWGIA’s reputation as a trusted partner to Indigenous Peoples and the go-to organisation on their rights in our part of the world.

We are also operating in a time of global crisis, with the COVID-19 pandemic reaching every corner of humanity. The long-term impact in a post-COVID-19 world will be particularly severe for Indigenous Peoples and is a new critical concern for IWGIA. We will be at the forefront of documenting, analysing, evaluating and sharing not only the impacts and longer term economic and political consequences for Indigenous communities and our partner organisations but also the actions and solutions Indigenous Peoples are using in response to the pandemic and its aftermath. We will also be agile and flexible, adjusting our programmes and activities accordingly to continuously provide an optimal response and support to Indigenous Peoples.

## THE ORGANISATION WE WANT TO BE

At the organisational level, we will shape and adapt our procedures to ensure that we are an agile and flexible organisation that can adjust and respond to changing circumstances and realities. Over the next five years, we will continue to strengthen our cooperation with Indigenous organisations and donors and build our alliances to be as prepared and effective as possible in our responses, working in solidarity and mutual support with like-minded networks, civil society organisations, and academics.

We will ensure a healthy and inspirational working environment that ensures a good work and family life balance and welcomes diversity among our staff and

Board, comprising different cultural backgrounds, genders, ages, knowledge and experience, to make space for cultural diversity and a true spirit of acceptance, support and expertise sharing.

We will adhere to and effectively implement our policies, such as our code of conduct, stress policy, SHEA policy, anti-corruption policy and safety and security policy, to ensure we are applying the highest standard of protections and best practices to support our staff and partners in their work. Over the next five years, we will regularly review our policies and strengthen our own capacity, as well as the capacity of our partners in these areas.

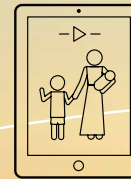
IWGIA strives to be a climate-conscious organisation, and yet our work entails extensive air and road travel, printing of publications and other carbon footprint-heavy activities. In 2021, we will therefore develop “greening IWGIA guidelines” with the aim, henceforward, of reducing our environmental footprint year-on-year through innovative approaches and technology.





**IWGIA**

**Documenting • Advocating • Empowering**



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Sunrise in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (Tanzania), the ancestral land of many Maasai pastoralists.

CREDIT: Marianne Wiben Jensen / IWGIA