



Alternative Report

“Voices, Contributions and Best Practices of Indigenous Women of Latin America in Fulfillment of the SDGs”

International Indigenous Women’s Forum – FIMI

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Alternative Report

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Introduction.

“May no one be left behind” is a phrase with a profound content, and one upon which the Indigenous Women of Latin America and their people have built commitments, actions, challenges, and defiance that have accomplished the unimaginable. This has been achieved despite the inequalities they have historically and continually face on a daily basis as the result of structures of racist, marginalizing, and patriarchal States.

These words have been taken up as a slogan for the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development established by the United Nations, as a plan of action for persons, the planet, and prosperity. The UN’s 17 SDGs, seek to make human rights a reality for all and attain gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The agenda places equal weight on the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.

In this context, the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI) finds it important to submit this Alternative Report. FIMI is a global mechanism that brings together the collective leadership of Indigenous Women human rights leaders and activists from around the world - Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Pacific, and the Arctic, with the aim of developing a common political agenda, building capacities, and developing the leadership of Indigenous Women. In this report, FIMI seeks to highlight the good practices and contributions of the Indigenous Women of Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Paraguay in Latin America towards fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals, as per the priorities assumed by their governments. FIMI seeks to disseminate the results of this report during the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF 2021).

In designing and developing this report, a methodology was used with a participatory, integrating, inclusive approach, based on identifying and acknowledging the proposals, demands, experiences, and best practices of the partner organizations of FIMI’s AYNÍ Fund and of other leadership groups and collectives. This made it possible to make a record of the contributions and proposals of Indigenous Women and their organizations regarding fulfillment of the SDGs, through a review of the literature and the conducting of interviews with women leaders of organizations of the above-mentioned countries.

The report contains 4 parts: 1. Background. 2. Current situation of Indigenous Women in Latin America with respect to progress on or fulfillment of the SDGs. 3. Best practices in the way of being and doing of Indigenous Women in making progress towards fulfillment of the SDGs, and 4. Pronouncements and demands coming from the voices and acts of Indigenous Women.



1. Background

Indigenous Women and the Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda is an instrument and mechanism that is universal in nature given its formulations. It is thus essential to identify the ways in which **Indigenous Women** have worked in promoting actions to ensure that the States, at a global level, comply with advancing the 2030 Agenda. One of the mechanisms established for progressing along such lines is the Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IPMG) for Sustainable Development. The IPMG is a space for planning, coordination, and advocacy at a global level, generating concerted efforts to promote the rights and development priorities of Indigenous Peoples at all levels. For such purpose, it established a Global Coordinating Committee (GCC) comprised by seven regional focal organizations with designated focal persons, along with representatives of women and indigenous youth.

One of those people is Joan Carling, an indigenous woman leader from Asia, representing Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education) who has a long history of commitment and defense regarding the exercise of and compliance with the specific and collective rights of Indigenous Women and their peoples. She has made great efforts and proposals so that the voices, way of being and doing of the **Indigenous Women** will be recognized and taken into account as part of the 2030 Agenda, thereby assuring that their point of view and demands will become commitments taken on by the governments and member States of the U.N.

With this trajectory and leadership, she has advocated at a global level, playing a major role in building networks and in providing training and sustained, open, close communications. These opportunities and spaces have made it possible for organizations of **Indigenous Women** and their peoples, as part of civil society, to present proposals and demands to the States during the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), allowing the perspective and vision of Indigenous Women to come to light as regards their demands for fulfillment of the SDGs, and have their contributions and initiatives as women for development and self-determination of their Indigenous Peoples be acknowledged and heard.

2. Current Situation of the Indigenous Women of Latin America with respect to Progress on or Fulfillment of the SDGs.

2.1. What the Sustainable Development Goals Mean for Indigenous Women

For the Indigenous Women of Latin America, based on their perspective and knowledge, the meaning and implications of the Sustainable Development Goals goes farther than a mere definition or proposing of a set of intentions. For these women, the Sustainable Development Goals are conceived of based on their sense of being and living as women and as peoples.



The SDGs are an opportunity for building a more pluralistic and inclusive world, one that acknowledges unity in diversity, where assets, natural resources, and humanity are intertwined as one. The SDGs are also mechanisms and strategies that propose actions to achieve *buen vivir* [good living], in search of harmony and equilibrium for the fulfillment of specific and collective rights.

These objectives help one to understand what inclusive sustainable development is, that is, development that is non-predatory, but rather protects life in all its manifestations, by proposing mechanisms that contribute to ending poverty, to equitable health, protection of ecosystems, education with equality, empowerment of women and an economy for *buen vivir*.

For women, based on their experiences, these are also commitments and responsibilities for the State to assume its role as guarantor of the rights of Indigenous Women and Indigenous Peoples.

The women leaders of various organizations of Latin America, share their voices and wisdoms as follows:¹

“The SDGs are geared towards seeking a more pluralistic, inclusive world.” (COMUNDICH, Guatemala)

“Mechanisms that allow us to have a strategic influence in several areas of importance for collective work in favor of us as women and in favor of our peoples.” (CONAMI, Mexico)

“They are a sign of prosperity for us as peoples, who sustain ourselves together with nature, water, and the forests.” (AMICA, Nicaragua)

“More than intentions, they need to be actions assumed by the State, just as we women are actually doing in the community and among our peoples.” (Council of the Charrúa Nation, Uruguay)

This vision provides us with a broad view of what Agenda 2030 means based on the worldview of Indigenous Women, entailing the expectation that the government must fulfill its mandates, that these goals are a collective responsibility, that they come alive to the extent that their contents are assumed as one's own and taken up as possibilities for moving towards change and transformation of a reality that historically and on a daily basis has been one of exclusion and inequality.

2.2. Social and Economic Situation of the Indigenous Women of Latin America

As part of this report, it is essential to identify the conditions faced by Indigenous Women in the social, economic, political, and cultural realms, thereby making it possible to gauge how this affects and

¹ Interviews with Indigenous Women leaders of the following organizations: CONAMI [National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women] Mexico; COMUNDICH [Coordinator of Ch'orti Communities] Guatemala; AMICA [Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast] Nicaragua; AMICAM [Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico] Guatemala Committee; Network of Simpaguany Women, Bolivia; Organization of Women of the Qom People of Paraguay; National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia; and Council of the Charrúa Nation, Uruguay. May 2021.



impacts their daily individual and collective lives. That analysis is based on the Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls, prepared by FIMI and presented in 2020, which provides a clear, objective panorama of the complex reality faced by Indigenous Women at a global level.

Complex and profound challenges and structural injustices continue to threaten Indigenous Women. Exploitation and trafficking, the increasingly aggressive appropriation of their lands and resources, the militarization of their territories, forced displacement and migration, the repression of social protest and the criminalization of defenders of human rights and the environment are just some of the human rights violations that continue to affect Indigenous Women and Girls. Furthermore, the recent COVID-19 pandemic is spreading rapidly all over the world, representing another critical contemporary challenge for Indigenous Women.²

Thus, access to land, land rights, and land dispossession are deeply interconnected with poverty, health, violence, armed conflicts, economy, human rights, and the environment.³ For Indigenous Peoples, their lands, territories and resources are the source of livelihood, medicine, intellectual property, food security, and spiritual well-being. Land is not only a factor of production. For Indigenous Women, this also signifies Mother Earth, life, dignity, the basis for their culture, spirituality, beliefs, their survival, food production systems, and traditional medicine. Thus, the loss of their lands, territories and resources results in the deterioration of their capacities to survive and of their resilience (UNPFII, 2020; paragraph 47).⁴

The report describes various forms of violence. Some of these forms of violence are gender specific, meaning that they target Indigenous Women as women (in the society and within indigenous communities) and others are not. Thus, individual integrity and freedom from violence are not limited to interpersonal physical and sexual violence but also include freedom from structural violence and dispossession related to land and natural resources (Kuokkanen, 2019)). On top of this, Indigenous Women experience racism and discrimination based on their indigenous identity, which also explains their increased exposure to systemic violence and inequalities within societies.⁵

Poverty is also deeply related to land dispossession, migration, armed conflicts, climate change, forced displacement, and loss of livelihood assets. Overall migration of Indigenous Women, and migration to urban areas in particular, has been documented in all regions, due to limited economic opportunities, food insecurity, land dispossession, and lack of basic social services, among other factors.⁶

² Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls. Our Voices and Actions for Our Rights after 25 Years of Beijing Platform for Action. FIMI. 2021. Page 16.

³ Ibid, Page 35.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, Page 36.



This reality is intensely reflected in the Latin America region, where Indigenous Women are the principal targets of all these inequalities.

Demographic Data

28 million indigenous women live in Latin America
48% live in rural areas
53% have no formal education
85% have informal jobs

Source: Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls. Our Voices and Actions for Our Rights after 25 Years of the Beijing Platform for Action. FIMI 2020. Page 48.

The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Women in formal education is very high in all countries in South and Central America. In several, only a small percentage of Indigenous girls (less than 10%) complete secondary school: 6% in Panama, 7% in Colombia and Nicaragua and 8% in Ecuador. In other countries, school completion rates are between 10% and 20% (IACHR, 2017). Furthermore, illiteracy is a persistent problem among Indigenous Women. In Guatemala, for example, about 58% of all Indigenous Women are illiterate; 62% in Paraguay, the figure is 43%, and in Mexico, it is 34%, four times higher than for non-Indigenous Women (IACHR, 2017). The educational careers of Indigenous Girls and Young Women are often interrupted for various reasons, including limited access to and coverage of schools due to urban/rural disparities; indigenous child labor; forced labor performing domestic chores or sales or agricultural work; child and adolescent pregnancy; and early and forced marriages (United Nations, 2010c), a persistent problem among Indigenous Women.⁷

With respect to health, available data indicate inequalities related to adolescent pregnancy and maternal and infant mortality between indigenous and non-indigenous populations. Indigenous Women experience lower life expectancy and higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality. An Indigenous Woman in Bolivia is almost twice as likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth, or puerperium than the average Bolivian woman. Indigenous health knowledge and practices are not widely recognized. They have limited or no access to quality and culturally and linguistically relevant health care services (including mental health care services) and suffer higher suicide rates. Indigenous Women lack information and education on sexual and reproductive health, and experience higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases, including the HIV/AIDS, and higher rates of teenage pregnancy.⁸

⁷ Ibid, Page 39.

⁸ Ibid, Pages 41-43.



Available information shows that Indigenous Women experience higher rates of gender-based violence compared to non-Indigenous Women, lower reporting rates, limited or no access to quality and culturally and linguistically relevant services, racialized policing, limited or no access to justice, and insufficient relevant public policies to prevent and protect them from violence. In the Americas, violence against woman is a serious, widespread and multidimensional human rights problem, which takes different forms and affects all countries in the region. Another pressing issue is violence resulting from early and forced child marriages and unions involving Indigenous Girls and Young Women (FIMI, 2006; CHIRAPAQ and UNFPA, 2018). Finally, access to justice in ordinary justice systems as well as in indigenous ones is still a major challenge and many gaps remain, while setbacks have been recorded in some countries (VIII Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women of the Americas, Violence Group, 2020). Nevertheless, Indigenous Women do not see themselves as passive victims but have taken up roles as mediators and peacebuilders (UNPFII, 2020; par. 55).⁹

The armed conflicts that affect Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women are mostly related to their lands, territories, and natural resources. In nearly every region of the world, IP are being displaced and severely affected by violence on their lands and territories. The situation of Indigenous Women is worse, as they are also subjected to sexual violence and rape. In addition, they experience the consequences of the militarization of territories by national armies or organized crime related to drug trafficking, as well as the expansion of military bases on indigenous lands and territories. In the Americas, the armed conflict in Colombia has been the main cause of forced displacement among Indigenous Women, and posing the threats of sexual violence, exploitation, and sexual abuse, in addition to the dispossession of Indigenous Women's lands and rural property (Fuentes López, 2010; 58). Violence caused by groups armed of different types in the northern triangle of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico) has also worsened, and armed groups have transformed some areas into highly militarized zones, leaving Indigenous Women extremely vulnerable (UNHCR, 2015 and RAISG).¹⁰

In the Americas, Indigenous Women tend to have higher unemployment and lower participation rates in the labor market compared to the non-Indigenous Women. They often work in precarious jobs, without contracts and without access to social benefits (ILO, 2019). While the percentage of women in the region without an independent income has fallen from 41% in 2002 to 28% in 2017, data from household surveys in four countries (Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay) show that, by hourly labor income and considering ethno-racial status and years of schooling, Indigenous Women, continue to occupy positions at the bottom of the income scale for systemic and structural reasons, regardless of their level of education (ECLAC, 2019). Moreover, according to the FAO, the percentage of women landowners is fairly low in the region, and they also face barriers in accessing credit and technical assistance, since they only

⁹ Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls. Our Voices and Actions for Our Rights after 25 Years of Beijing Platform for Action. FIMI. 2021. Pages 44-46.

¹⁰ Ibid, Page 46.



receive 10% of the credit and the 5% of the technical assistance for the sector in the entire region (UN, 2015).¹¹

2.3. Situation of Indigenous Women with respect to Fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs Prioritized in their Regions.

The 2030 Development Agenda is a plan of action in favor of persons, the planet, and prosperity, aimed at strengthening universal peace within a broader sense of liberty. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include the eradication of poverty, promotion of prosperity and well-being for all, protection of the environment, and combatting climate change at a global level. This represents an opportunity for the States as well as a set of challenges for humanity.

The 17 SDGs and their 169 objectives are integrated and indivisible in nature, with a global, universal applicability. They nonetheless consider the differentiated realities, capacities, and development levels of each country, with respect for their national policies and priorities. It thus corresponds to each government to set their own national objectives, guided by the content of the SDGs and considering the circumstances of each country. Each country has the responsibility of deciding upon how to incorporate the aspirations and worldwide objectives into their national planning processes, policies, and strategies, so that said objectives will contribute to the sustainable development of each country and its population.

Nonetheless, the analysis presented in the Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls. Our Voices and Actions for Our Rights after 25 Years of the Beijing Platform for Action conducted by FIMI in 2021 reflects otherwise. That study analyzed the situation of Indigenous Women in Latin America, as is set forth in the preceding portion of this alternative report. The study provides a clear reflection of the current situation of Indigenous Women, in which the priorities of the SDGs ratified by their governments are not being fulfilled. This is despite the fact that the SDGs identify specific objectives, which can be translated into concrete strategies, programs, and actions that can contribute to changing the reality that Indigenous Women and their peoples are facing.

This is confirmed in what has been gathered in the form of testimonies and experiences of Indigenous Women leaders and their organizations.¹²

SDG 1. No Poverty

Migration of Indigenous Women from their communities to the cities has increased sharply. Indigenous Women are moving into settlements on the outskirts of the city, which causes overcrowding for them

¹¹ Ibid, Page 49 - 50.

¹² Interviews with Indigenous Women leaders of the following organizations of: CONAMI [National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women] Mexico; COMUNDICH [Coordinator of Ch'orti Communities] Guatemala; AMICA [Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast] Nicaragua; AMICAM [Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico] Guatemala Committee; National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia, Network of Simpaguany Women, Bolivia, and Council of the Charrúa Nation, Uruguay. May 2021.



and their families, resulting in a loss of identity, lack of adequate means and conditions for *buen vivir* [good living], and conditions of vulnerability and increased poverty. The government of Uruguay does not have a differentiated policy for actions to eradicate the poverty in which Indigenous Women and their peoples live, because there is no constitutional recognition of the existence of Indigenous Peoples. (National Charrúa Council, Uruguay).

In Bolivia, Indigenous Women do not have access to fair trade, because they do not have the conditions to travel out of their community in order to sell their products in the cities, and when they can, the prices are not fair. Intermediaries buy their merchandise at prices that do not allow them to even recover their investment. In addition, many people were recently fired from their jobs, most of whom were women, which has exacerbated poverty. (National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia).

SDG 2. Zero Hunger

A food security program was promoted through a governmental Secretariat of Guatemala however a paternalistic approach was used, which failed to contribute to reducing malnutrition or improving health. The approach was noncomprehensive and lacked cultural relevance. It failed to meet the needs and demands of Indigenous Women and their peoples in communities where chronic malnutrition rates are very high. (AMICAM, Guatemala Committee).

The actions targeting hunger in Bolivia were promoted using GMO's, which resulted in the Indigenous Women losing their native seeds, while also deteriorating the soil and providing food that was low in nutrients. This program was carried out by the government without taking into account the reality of life of the indigenous population in the country. (Bolivia).

SDG 3. Good Health and Well-Being

Maternal mortality is a growing problem for Indigenous Women. Compounding this problem, the mechanisms to deal with the COVID 19 pandemic failed to take the indigenous population into account. This especially affected women and deepened inequalities in access to health services, which had already been precarious and deficient. (CONAMI, Mexico).

Mining companies have a steadily increasing presence in indigenous territories, without applying health and safety measures, and they are the ones who have brought in COVID. (National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia).

The Uruguayan government's failure to recognize ancestral health systems became even more apparent during the pandemic. Indeed, during the emergency everything was concentrated in the cities, without taking into account what was happening in the rural communities and with Indigenous Women. (Council of Charrúa People, Uruguay).



There is a law that passed regarding a community intercultural health system. It is being implemented, but from a Western perspective, with official traditional health service practices, which are very distant from the reality of Indigenous Women and their peoples (Organization of Women of Bolivia)

SDG 4. Quality Education

The Mexican government has prioritized the development of infrastructure projects, leaving out the improvement of education services for Indigenous Women and girls. Despite its commitment to implement SDG 4 on education, the Mexican government lacks the political will to implement the bilingual education system. It is not showing an interest in promoting an educational reform that responds to the cultural identity of women and their peoples. (CONAMI Mexico).

Educational levels in Bolivia are very low. In the elementary schools, the teachers have not mastered the virtual platforms, and the children are not learning. The mothers have assumed the role of explaining the texts sent home from school, and many of the mothers do not know how to read and write. The same thing is happening in secondary and higher education. The families do not have resources for use of the Internet, or a good signal to connect. (Network of Simpaguany Women, Bolivia).

SDG 5. Gender Equality

The actions of the Women's Institute do not include a line for Indigenous Women. There is no bureau for addressing the race & ethnicity issue and for the defense of the specific rights of Indigenous Women. The struggle to open visible spaces of participation continues, and the gap is growing. (Council of the Charrúa Nation, Uruguay).

There are very few opportunities for women to exercise their individual and collective rights. This is evidenced in the persecution of leaders who are at the forefront of the defense of these rights. There is a growing strategy of control on the part of the State against women rights defenders and of repressing their demands. (AMICAM, Guatemala Committee).

The government has no interest in promoting real mechanisms for upholding the rights of Indigenous Women. It persists in constantly violating their right to political participation, denying demands over their needs, and denying their identity. The few spaces that have been generated are closed and marked by favoritism, without real representation of indigenous peoples, much less of Indigenous Women. The government needs to open its doors and show a will for the spaces of decision-making to be open for the leadership of Indigenous Women. (CONAMI, Mexico).

Women are increasingly marginalized from receiving information. They do not have dignified access to basic services. There is still inequality between women and men, which is especially prevalent in places of power, and between the countryside and the city. (Network of Simpaguany Women, Bolivia).



On the part of the government there is no equity. The programs carried out only benefit a chosen few, which results in greater inequality, because the actions are discriminatory, especially for Indigenous Women and their peoples. (AMICA, Nicaragua).

A clear example of the lack of equity is that in Bolivia, femicides are occurring at a much higher rate. This causes fear, terror, and disequilibrium among women, who are not provided with any system of protection by the government or by the justice system, which is racist and patriarchal. (Organization of Women of Bolivia).

SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation

In Nicaragua there are still many communities and neighborhoods that have no water service. There are laws, but they are only on paper and are not a reality. The same thing occurs with sanitation, and there is no compliance on all of this by the government. With this situation development for all will not be reached, much less sustainable development. (AMICA, Nicaragua).

The government talks about the 17 SDGs and the importance of fulfilling their objectives, but when the issue of limited water and sanitation services comes up, the extractive companies are conspicuously absent. Those companies are the ones that are taking away our mineral and natural resources such as gold, which affects groundwater reserves and leaves us without water, especially without water fit for human consumption. (Organization of Women of Bolivia).

SDG 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth

The economic situation of Indigenous Women is difficult. Indigenous Women continue to be part of the informal economy, without conditions of security and labor protection. Their work generates a meager income for them, barely enough to bring home some food to their families from one day to the next. This exacerbates the problem of violence, since the mothers have to leave home in order to work and are unable to care for their children, whom they leave in the hands of third persons that cause them harm. The women have to go to work and bring food home to their family. The government has no specific program to respond to labor demand or for production projects for Indigenous Women (AMICAM, Guatemala Committee).

For access to jobs for women in Bolivia, all the biosecurity measures are set, but it is the women that have to assume the costs to cover those measures. The women also have to accept low wages just to have a minimal income. (National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia).

SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities

The benefits of the supposed development of which the government speaks are a falsehood. The programs it implements are benefiting other sectors such as businesspeople, private enterprise, and other sectors, without taking into account the actual reality of Indigenous Women. This increases the



gaps of inequality and exclusion. The problems affecting indigenous peoples are not dealt with, such as encroachment by settlers, deterioration of the environment, and the exploitation of natural resources. There is no development for the peoples. There are no quality services; there is no equality for Indigenous Women. (AMICA Nicaragua).

For more than 12 years, there has been a major distancing of the government with respect to the indigenous organizations. There has been a severe reversal of the few institutional mechanisms for indigenous peoples and especially for women, above all on issues of justice, the eradication of violence, and political participation. There is no political sustainability for the State to attend to these needs. There is an increase in corruption and diverting of funds away from attending to problems of health, education, and improvement of the economy. This has provoked much more inequality and exclusion, which directly impacts Indigenous Women and their peoples. The justice system has been coopted, and the government is benefiting other sectors, such as businesspeople, drug trafficking, and companies that extract the material assets and minerals of the peoples (AMICAM, Guatemala Committee).

Parallel leadership bodies are being created by the Bolivian government, coopting leaders in order to divide the struggle of the peoples in defense of territory and in defense of the right to the justice and political participation. (National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia).

SDG 13. Climate Action

With respect to climate change, the Mexican government has ratified its commitment, but does not comply. There is a policy, but without a mechanism. This is not effective action, and that is the gap on this issue. The benefits of this law are more for extractive companies that invade the territories, without any consultation whatsoever with the communities, despite the fact that historically the communities are the ones who have worked to care for and protect the territory and the natural resources. This leads to severe conflicts and even the death of women leaders who fight against this violation of the territory. (CONAMI, Mexico).

There is a growing persecution against women leaders who are involved in defending the collective right to territory and to self-determination, who together with other leaders are incarcerated. The violent evictions of Indigenous Peoples continue, affecting women, children, and the elderly when their homes are places of interest for the extractive companies. Those companies have the government's approval to attack the peoples. (AMICAM, Guatemala).

In the case of Paraguay, a transnational company is present, which has a project for planting cloned eucalyptus in communities where there is no water, with a quantity of lands in hectares. This is despite the existence of a protocol of the Indigenous Peoples of Paraguay that passed in 2019, through Article 239, which is based on free, prior, and informed consultation. Yet with government approval, it is never fulfilled. (Organization of Women of the Qom People of Paraguay).



In the territories of the various regions of Bolivia, the advance of extractive industries is leaving the communities and neighborhoods without water, while contaminating water, destroying forests, valleys, and the population that inhabits the territories. This triggers diseases, leaves the soil unfit for planting, and increases risks in the face of climate change. (National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia).

The women leaders of various organizations of Latin America share their voices and wisdoms as follows:¹³

“There is a need for to train and open up the government in order for ‘leaving no one behind’ to become a reality. It appears that, with the pandemic and the situation we face as indigenous women, all of us are being left behind.” (CONAMI, Mexico)

“There is no fulfillment of the SDGs. The government turns them into shreds and they fall to the ground. They do as they please with them, and inequality keeps growing. This naked truth became fully apparent with COVID. The great inequality was there for all to see, between rich countries and poor ones, between the territories of the west and the south. (Organization of Women of Bolivia).

“The struggle to protect the territory and biodiversity is waged by the peoples and by indigenous women” (Organization of Women of the Qom People of Paraguay).

3. Best Practices in the Way of Being and Doing of Indigenous Women in Making Progress towards Fulfillment of the SDGs.

One of the aims of this alternative report is to present the best practices developed by Indigenous Women and their organizations, highlighting the contributions they have made in the implementation of the SDGs. These are defined from their point of view, as the set of actions and processes carried out collectively, responding to the needs, conditions, realities, knowledge, and experiences of Indigenous Women and of their communities. This contributes to promoting joint work and the sharing of their resources. Taking as a basis their own demands and their own knowledge in promoting changes, it provides lessons that can be replicated in other contexts and situations.

From this perspective, we now share the best practices from the way of being and doing of Indigenous Women and their organizations, who were consulted for this report, and that they brought forward from their countries to advance towards the fulfillment of the SDGs.¹⁴

¹³ Interviews with Indigenous Women leaders of the following organizations: CONAMI [National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women] Mexico; AMICA [Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast] Nicaragua; AMICAM [Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico] Guatemala Committee; Organization of Women of Bolivia, Organization of Women of the Qom People of Paraguay; and Council of the Charrúa Nation, Uruguay. May 2021.

¹⁴ Interviews with Indigenous Women leaders of the following organizations: CONAMI [National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women] Mexico; COMUNDICH [Coordinator of Ch’orti Communities] Guatemala; AMICA [Association of Indigenous Women of the



3.1 Best Practices in Fulfillment of SDG 2. Zero Hunger. Food Security for Life.

The Coordinating Body of Associations and Communities for the Integral Development of the Ch'orti' Region (COMUNDICH) of Guatemala has implemented a Food Security and Nutritional project, reviving their own forms of subsistence and promoting the system of traditional foods and native plants. This project has been taken on by families in the communities for the consumption of healthy foods.

The National Charrúa Council of Uruguay is implementing the project: named Sembrando Ancestralidad Charrúa ["Planting Charrúa Ancestrality"], with the planting of crops, medicinal and aromatic plants. The project is conducted by women who take charge of planting their parcels of corn, beans, rice, vegetables, and plants and preparing meals with the products they gather from the earth. They also have a seedbank, so that the women and families can store their native seeds and use them in times of drought. This practice has permitted the subsistence of many communities, especially during pandemic times. They are also working on producing audiovisual materials to share them with girls, boys, and youth, as a means of consciousness raising for them to take up this cultivation practice.

The Organization of Women of the Qom People of Paraguay is promoting a community program named Ollas Populares ["Popular Cooking Pots"], which are lunches prepared by the women based on vegetables, herbs, and grains produced in the community, thus ensuring good nutrition for families, especially children and the elderly.

The Network of Simpaguany Women is promoting the practice of bartering with a dual purpose: one is marketing, and the other is nutrition. This consists of exchanging products from the various regions. Where one region has fish, they exchange it for potatoes. This has contributed enormously to having good nutrition in the communities.

3.2 Best practices in Fulfillment of SDG 3. Good Health and Well-Being Health for *Buen Vivir*.

The Guatemala Committee of the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico supports actions of organizations that accompany midwives for their strengthening and recognition by the official system, joining their practices with traditional medicine systems. These traditional systems remain in effect and their use has now increased due to the pandemic.

Atlantic Coast] Nicaragua; AMICAM [Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico] Guatemala Committee; Organization of Women of Bolivia; Organization of Women of the Qom People of Paraguay; National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory In Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia; Network of Simpaguany Women, Bolivia; and Council of the Charrúa Nation Uruguay. May 2021.



The National Charrúa Councils of Uruguay engages in actions for prevention and healthcare, reviving the use of medicinal roots and plants, and applying the healing methods used by grandmothers and grandfathers of the communities, as wise men and women who carry curative knowledge within their being. This is benefitting the families and especially the Indigenous Women and communities.

The National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia is working hand-in-hand with the Original Ancestral Authorities who conduct activities to prevent the spread of COVID, which based on their worldview is called “*Japajniño*.” This is done through a ceremony where the grandfathers and grandmothers go to the highest mountains of the community, as sacred places, and set up a small table on which they place incense and medicinal and aromatic plants. On their knees, they ask Pacha Mama to put an end to this disease. This practice has contributed to preventing further spread of the disease.

3.3 Best Practices in Fulfillment of SDG 5. Gender Equality Towards equity based on inclusion with and for Indigenous Women.

The Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, AMICA, is conducting a program of promotion of the specific and collective rights of Miskita women, as well as a program for prevention of and response to violence. The program provides advice and accompaniment to women in filing crime reports. Through community legal guides who coordinate with experienced leaders in the resolution of cases, they seek conciliation mechanisms. They address the issue of rights and of a life free from violence with men, youth, teachers, and with others in order to raise their awareness of their roles in order to prevent violence towards women and girls. They have a sexual education area directed towards children and adolescents.

The experiences of the National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women, CONAMI, of Mexico, in creating alliances in strategic spaces, such as academia, has made it possible to gain a foothold on issues such as the recognition of the specific rights of Indigenous Women and the promotion of mechanisms to address and defend those rights. Advocacy at a governmental level has also been strengthened through spaces of dialogue, presenting actions and demands and challenging the State, given the government’s failure to fulfill its role as guarantor of the rights of Indigenous Women and of their peoples.

Women leaders who form a part of the National Charrúa Council organized women, bringing them together as part of the first organization of Indigenous Women themselves at a national level in Uruguay. This initiative is aimed at constituting a space of participation and advocacy with respect to the State, in order to gain recognition for Indigenous Women and for their demands and needs. Another best practice is the involvement of the community authorities in receiving cases of violence against the women, whom they accompany and support, while coordinating the referral of cases when considered necessary. The women who form a part of this council engage in actions for prevention and awareness raising to prevent violence against



women and girls. They provide legal advice, supporting processes at trials or in mediation mechanisms.

The Coordinating Body of Associations and Communities for the Integral Development of the Ch'orti' Region of Guatemala promotes the participation of women in the system of ancestral authorities, Council of Men and Women Elders, in which the role of the women is to direct, coordinate, seek and provide advice, and promote consensus in decision-making.

SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation Water for Life.

Part of the actions of the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico, Guatemala Committee, is to support the organizations and groups that work with ancestral authorities in the defense of the water. This historic struggle of the peoples is generating discussions, since it is a collective right. Those who are supporting the people are organizing in the communities to prevent water from being diverted, as a contribution to preventing the problem from becoming more acute.

The National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia is working on a methodology for analyzing the situation of water and natural resources, using a timeline. This makes it possible for the communities to be aware of the impacts and effects of pollution and identify actions to be taken by the communities.

SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities Carving the Road towards Equality.

The Council of the Charrúa Nation is accompanying the work of the council of elders in implementing the conflict resolution system. The system is based on respect for one's word, using the bastion of justice as a symbol. In order to analyze the problem, the parties involved are called to a meeting, where the situation is expounded upon. Justice is sought using a reparative approach, where a follow-up plan is agreed upon with actions by both the parties and the council of elders, which verifies and accompanies compliance with that plan.

Leaders who are part of the Guatemala Committee of the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico have promoted the development of work agendas with specific social, economic, political, cultural, and legal strategies, for the exercise of and compliance with individual and collective rights of Mayan, Garifuna, and Xinka women. This forms the basis for inputs into the design of governmental policies and programs in favor of Indigenous Women in Guatemala.

The National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women of Mexico, CONAMI, is promoting the Community Gender Emergency program. This system, for generating data on the situation of violence experienced by women, makes it possible to collect first-hand information and make



the state and federal governments aware of this problem that threatens the lives of Indigenous Women.

With the support of the National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia, information management is being promoted from a pluralistic point of view, respecting the practices and beliefs of the peoples. This provides support for connecting Indigenous Women to marketing networks so that their products will be sold at fair prices. The entire project is conducted through the Aymara and Kechua languages.

SDG 13. Climate Action

Protection of Mother Earth, Well-being for the Planet and the Climate.

The women leaders who form a part of the Coordinating Body of Ch'orti Communities in Guatemala work on the recovery of territory as an action in favor of their collective right to self-determination. They recently won a case for recovery of their lands, which they now are working and protecting. As an ancestral practice based on their worldview, they seek to avoid the use of chemicals that harm natural resources, and instead revive practices based on the protection and maintenance of natural resources, and minimization of the impacts of climate change.

An important practice carried out by the National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia consists of building national and international alliances with other peoples and women-led organizations, seeking consensus with their leadership and jointly defining strategies for negotiation in presenting positions in defense of their territories. This practice has made it possible to present clear denunciations and responses in favor of their peoples.

By implementing these practices based on the way of being and doing of Indigenous Women and their organizations, they are contributing to fulfillment of the SDGs. This reflects how their own knowledge, resources, worldviews, and lessons learned have generated actions to continue along the path towards their *buen vivir*, so that no one will be left behind.

3.1. Contributions of Indigenous Women to Fulfillment of the SDGs.

As a result of the implementation of best practices promoted by Indigenous Women, the following contributions have been identified:

- Contributions for the improvement of food and nutritional security, as a result of the implementation and revival of ancestral production systems, the collection and stockpiling of native seeds, and foods produced in the communities and peoples.
- The mechanisms of collective, collaborative, complementary work in solidarity have been strengthened, based on the worldview and lived experiences of women, men, youth,



grandmothers and grandfathers of Indigenous Peoples for the care, protection, maintenance, and defense of territory, natural assets, and life, as guiding principles of their ancestral practices to respond to the impact of climate change and its effects.

- Community healthcare for Indigenous Women based on ancestral, communal systems of medicine and of practices of healing and spirituality, promoting the use and recognition of this system in official sectors, and promoting its application in the population of their local areas and regions.
- The re-defining of equity, based on the way of being, outlook, and voice of Indigenous Women, as holders of specific, individual, and collective rights, through demanding, struggling for, and exercising these rights at a community, national, regional, and global level. They assume a role of recognition of their own being, leadership, knowledge, and respect towards other stakeholders, seeking and building equilibrium and harmony to achieve *buen vivir* and reduce inequalities.
- Bridges have been built with other movements of indigenous peoples of the region, with organizations of non-Indigenous Women, governments, and other sectors, in order to create strategic alliances. The demands and proposals of Indigenous Women have been presented and coordination has been created in order to develop institutional mechanisms for fulfillment of the SDGs.
- Communal work, based on the values of respect, duality, complementarity, equilibrium, and harmony, at an individual and collective level, has contributed to the development of economies of solidarity, where fair prices are demanded for their products. This is contributing to providing Indigenous Women and their peoples with income to support their families and communities, so that their work will reduce poverty.

3.2. Challenges Faced by Indigenous Women

Lack of information about and familiarity with the SDGs.

Given the lack of dissemination on what the SDGs are and what they mean for Indigenous Women and their peoples, these women and their organizations have taken on the role of reinterpreting the SDGs, bringing them to life, and taking them to the community. With that as a starting point, they promote actions and best practices making it possible to contribute to reducing poverty and inequalities.

Lack of political will on the part of the governments

The absence of commitment and political will on the part of the governments to fulfill the approved objectives of the 2030 Agenda has been a challenge that the Indigenous Women and their organizations have faced, even though some public institutions do exist as governing entities for implementing the objectives of that agenda. Disaggregated data has not been made available on



Indigenous Women with respect to policies that would reflect data on the social, demographic, and health situation of Indigenous Women.

Lack of recognition, and demands for their specific, individual, and collective rights

Based on their perspective and experiences, another important challenge is that of demanding and receiving respect for their rights at all levels, in all spaces, and in all their manifestations, thereby allowing Indigenous Women to be recognized as historic and present rights holders, and assuming and sensing that they deserve their rights.

Ridding oneself of Internalized structural racism and discrimination

Given that the social, economic, legal, and political system is racist and discriminatory in nature, it continues to be extremely challenging for Indigenous Women to participate in spaces of political advocacy. Above all, this is because Indigenous Women are constantly being judged and excluded by the State, which does not recognize their identity and does not respect their worldview. Indigenous Women must thus move forward in the midst of these circumstances, ridding themselves of the effects and impacts this causes them. They must feel that they are entitled to dignity and must take up their indigenous identity with pride, security, and determination. They must assume a role of resistance, of laying claim to their being, ridding their thinking of the vestiges of exclusion and racism to which they have been subject.

Confronting and de-internalizing violence

Despite the efforts of Indigenous Women to confront and reduce violence, it is growing, especially in the form of systematic violence and persecution of indigenous leaders for the defense of territory and of land. The eradication of violence continues to be an uphill battle. Yet Indigenous Women are committed and persevere in processes of healing and strengthening their identities, leadership, and rights as tools to de-internalize this violence and its impacts. They bring to life their ancestral wisdom and promote that wisdom, together with men, children, youth, and other sectors, to move forward towards a life free from violence.

The impacts and effects of the pandemic.

Tackling the pandemic as a global challenge and its impact on the economies, health and integration of indigenous peoples, this brings into sharper focus the history of poverty and hunger faced by Indigenous Women and their peoples.

Strengthening networks among Indigenous Women and peoples

To keep building alliances among Indigenous Women, non-Indigenous Women, and organizations of ancestral peoples in their territories and at a regional level, promoting ties of support, coordination of resources, contributions, sharing of experiences, and providing sustainability for participation and actions in favor of life. As a challenge, this calls for being respectful of the political definition and priorities of one another. What must be ensured is a continuation of the struggle, a sense conviction and commitment to the work by and for women and their peoples. This needs to be accomplished without an abandoning one's identity or worldview, while being discerning in accepting new ideas and innovative experiences, yet never losing the sense of community and collectivity.



Management of resources for sustainability

Applying for cooperation funds as Indigenous Women is still a challenge, since their organizations do not always have the know-how and preparation for proposing projects. Moreover, other organizations, whether of non-Indigenous Women or other sectors, continue to use the situation of the Indigenous Women to procure cooperation funds. Given this situation, the women leaders have promoted and implemented training processes on project management, so that they will have the tools to make their own proposals.

Use of technological communication systems

Given the circumstances brought about by the pandemic, it has been a challenge for women and their organizations use the technological tools for communicating and continue building bridges and networks of work. This is because they do not have the conditions, resources, and means to access these media that are so essential. On the one hand, they are mostly located in rural areas. On the other, use of these communication networks and platforms is costly; they are not easy to manage, and in many cases the educational level of the women and peoples is insufficient to be able to use these systems.

3.3. Principal Lessons Learned

Use of instruments and legal and international frameworks for managing development

Given the growing demands in the defense of their rights and in the exercise of these rights by Indigenous Women and their organizations, they consider it important to make use of international instruments and mechanisms and those at a national level in each country. These instruments represent an opportunity for supporting their demands.

Understanding of what equality is from the perspective of Indigenous Women and their peoples.

Indigenous Women seek equality and respect in territories where racism, discrimination, and inequality reign, and they call for both their individual and collective rights. This means that they must draw upon the essence and spirit of their knowledge and worldview, weaving together the fibers of strength and determination of their peoples to place them at the service of all humanity.

Collective, collaborative work for advocacy

The importance of working in alliance with other organizations and other stakeholders, in keeping with their own demands and agreements, makes it possible to pool resources, strengthen possibilities of support and diversifying the resources available to indigenous peoples and women. One must advocate for non-exclusion of other women and men and, moreover, promote collective work with respect for the diversity of ideas and thoughts. This must be based on an open, clear dialogue, with a commitment towards the collective cause, seeking the exercise of and respect for the defense of human rights. It is necessary to identify points of convergence, to unite efforts and processes.

The promotion of intergenerational support networks



Of fundamental importance is the recognition of the contributions, knowledge, and expressions of youth, which add to the processes of defending rights and achieving the SDGs, in conjunction with passing down the experience of the elders, with even the very youngest recognizing the values and principles of work for and with the indigenous peoples.

Use and leveraging of communications as tool of empowerment

The issue of communications, as an internal strategy for disseminating and managing information has been key. This has made it possible to highlight the reality and actions carried out by the organizations of Indigenous Women and of ancestral peoples. It is accomplished using the available alternative media, in the conditions that are possible, as a mechanism for creating awareness and collective conscience.

Importance of connecting the ancestral with the official

A fundamental aspect identified in developing best practices has been the need to promote mechanisms to coordinate official approaches with ancestral ways, ranging from public policies to mechanisms of justice and economic measures, and for recognition of the systems advocated for by women and their Indigenous Peoples themselves. This has made it possible to define pathways of work and support towards achieving the SDGs.

4.1. Proclamations and demands based on the voice and actions of Indigenous Women

To the States, represented by the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Paraguay:

- That they assume their responsibility, obligation, and commitment, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, based on an approach of equity, inclusion, transparency, and respect for diversity, acknowledging the reality, conditions, knowledge, and worldview of Indigenous Women and their ancestral peoples.
- The implementation of public policies based on recognition of the ancestral worldview, identity, values, principles, knowledge, and practices of Indigenous Women and their peoples. This must be based on the development of programs, with sufficient, necessary, and pertinent budgets, institutionality, and the resources, carried out at the community, local, regional, and national levels.
- We demand that priority be placed on demands for compliance with our specific, individual, and collective rights as Indigenous Women and ancestral peoples, eradicating the pacts they have with private enterprise, extractive companies, narco trafficking, the military, and organized crime, who historically attack the lives and dignity of our peoples and our leaders, through persecution, incarceration, and even death.
- Stop the coopting of indigenous leaders who are defending the territories and natural resources.



- The fulfillment of their role of developing strategies, actions, and processes based on the U.N. mechanisms, in real and not politically correct compliance with the various mechanisms, pacts and agreements, which they have approved. It must be ensured that the resources and funds they manage directly reach the peoples, under mechanisms of transparency and objectivity.
- The promotion and formation of spaces of dialogue and negotiation, in order to take up the proposals and demands of Indigenous Women and their peoples, so that there will be a direct line of work involving legitimate leaders who represent the grassroots, our organizations and movements, without favoritism.
- That through the corresponding institutionality, they promote the generation of disaggregated data regarding the situation and reality of Indigenous Women and our peoples, in order to define indicators in education, health, access to basic services, economic well-being, and justice. This should be done in order to monitor the fulfillment of prioritized SDGs.

4.2. Recommendations to the International Cooperation Community.

- That its support, solidarity, and accompaniment of the implementation of actions towards fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda, be more open, facilitating a system of access to cooperation resources, through organizational channels that recognize the reality, practices, and knowledge of Indigenous Women and our peoples. They should promote actions to build bridges of support and accompaniment with grassroots organizations at a community, local, national, and regional level.
- The promotion of mechanisms making it possible to identify points of convergence and alliance among several cooperating entities that would join together for the fulfillment of and progress in achieving the 2030 global agenda.

4.3. Specific Demands as Indigenous Women

- To maintain a constant day-by-day defense, at an individual, collective, community, local, national, regional, and global level, so that we will continue advancing in attaining recognition and respect, and take our place as the holders of individual, specific, and collective rights.
- To build networks of collective alliances in which our diverse ancestral identities, wisdom, practices, and knowledge are respected, without having gender or ethnicity markers placed upon us, but rather for each of us, together, to put forward our approaches, struggles, insights, proposals, actions, and demands, without feeling judged by other women, other sectors, and by the State.
- To defend our way of being and doing as Indigenous Women, in spaces of non-Indigenous Women and of the feminist movement, not allowing ourselves to be labeled as part of colonial



or divisive feminism. To develop coordinated advocacy actions, putting forth our worldviews in the defense of our specific and collective rights.

5. Interviews Conducted

A major part of the content of this alternative report was based on conducting the following interviews:

- Bernarda Pesoa of the Qom People - Organization of Women of the Qom People of Paraguay.
- Betty Villca - National Andean Coordinating Body for the Defense of Territory in Zones of Protected Areas of Bolivia.
- José Rodeniro Latán - Coordinating Body of Associations and Communities for the Integral Development of the Ch'orti' Region of Guatemala – COMUNDICH.
- Laura Hernández - National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women of Mexico – CONAMI Mexico.
- Mónica Michelena - Council of the Charrúa Nation, Uruguay.
- Nidia Bustillos - Organization of Women of Bolivia.
- Norma Isabel Sacrtic of the Maya Pocomam People - Guatemala Committee of the Alliance of Women Indigenous of Central America and Mexico - AMICAM.
- Petrona Fernandez Osco of the Kichua People - Network of Women Simpaguany, Bolivia.
- Rodalina González Flores of the Miskito People - Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua – AMICA.

6. Bibliography

- Interviews with Indigenous Women leaders of the following organizations: CONAMI [National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women], Mexico; COMUNDICH [Coordinator of Ch'orti Communities], Guatemala; AMICA [Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast], Nicaragua; AMICAM [Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico], Guatemala Committee; and Council of the Charrúa Nation, Uruguay. May 2021.
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