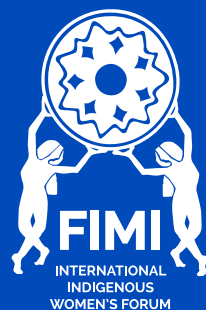


Nothing About Us Without Us



2022
YEARBOOK

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Index

Editorial: The Work Pays Off	5
2022: A Good Harvest	6
Voices for Advocacy	8
The Road to GR39: Advocacy and the Strength of Indigenous Women	10
Defenders of the Land, Guardians of the Culture and Identity of Indigenous Peoples	14
Indigenous Women Are Part of the Solution to Climate Change	18
Leadership tools	22
Sharing Ideas as Sisters: Indigenous Women Training Ourselves to Defend our Rights	24
Global Leadership School 2022: 5 regions, 33 participants	26
Webs of Knowledge: A Window into our Stories	26
A Win on the Global Agenda for the World's Indigenous Women	28
Ancestral Cultures Are Key in the Construction of our Identity	29
Caring for the Land and the Natural Goods: The Commitment of Indigenous Women	30
Networks for Well-Being	34
The Power of Ayni: The <i>land, community</i> Project	36
The Keepers of Knowledge	37
Farming Is the Future	38
Sports as a Tool for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women	40
Spotlight on Cultural Diversity	42
Different Ways of Knowing: <i>Contributions to Intercultural Research from the Perspectives of Indigenous Women</i>	44
Wodum, the Indigenous Women's Watch Against Violences	46



The Work Pays Off

The path that we write about in these pages has been travelled with dedication and commitment across Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Arctic, and the Pacific. FIMI has resumed its face-to-face activities, in seven different international forums, to promote the rights of Indigenous Girls, Youth and Women to live free of violence. Additionally, we had the privilege to collaborate with indigenous organizations and women leaders from five regions of the world on our different strategic programs.

We have joined forces with regional, subregional, national and local networks of Indigenous Women's organizations. These networks contributed to the adoption of the first legally binding international instrument for the rights of Indigenous Women: General Recommendation 39 of the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). Together, we have reached a milestone for the full exercise of our individual and collective rights.

We also led a global consultation to find the name that would give its identity to the Indigenous Women's Watch Against Violence: "Wodum". This word comes from Papora, an indigenous language spoken in Taiwan, a province of China. It means "powerful women, power and spirit against violence, despair and weakness". We are still working on the design of this Watch, and hope to make it available soon to Indigenous Women and decision makers in general.

Elsewhere, 69 new partner organizations joined the Ayni Fund, and the Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women received 33 Indigenous Women. As part of the training process, 32 of them have developed an advocacy plan. FIMI also provided technical and financial support to 12 Indigenous Women participating in the Intercultural Research Certification Program so that they could carry out their case studies.

To further our institutional strengthening, we approved 10 proposals from various foundations and philanthropic funds. Additionally, we signed 11 new agreements with donors, bringing the total project portfolio to 21 donor agreements.

Let us pause here and take a breath to give thanks to the strength and energy of each person who has contributed to the spirit of solidarity with Indigenous Women, Girls and Communities throughout 2022. Together, we have faced global trials that challenge us, but do not defeat us.

Teresa Zapeta
Executive Director, FIMI



2022!

A Good Harvest



81 Indigenous Women participated in our strategic programs.



We received **US\$ 11.080.000** and **€ 220.000** from foundations and philanthropic funds.



The number of agreements with donors rose to **21** with the signing of **11** new agreements, including with the Ford Foundation, Bridgespan, Mama Cash and Swift.



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND ADVOCACY

We supported Indigenous Women and Organizations across **7 INTERNATIONAL FORUMS**.

We participated in **COP27**.



More than **5 GATHERINGS** of Indigenous Women from different regions were organized to promote CEDAW's General Recommendation 39.



A delegation of **26 INDIGENOUS WOMEN** from all regions participated in the eighty-second session of the CEDAW Committee in Geneva.



CAPACITY BUILDING

33 Indigenous Women from Asia, the Americas, Africa, the Arctic and the Pacific trained at the Global Leadership School.



AYNI FUND

With the incorporation of **69** new members, active membership rose to **108** representing **217** different Indigenous Peoples.



RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

12 Indigenous Women participated in the Intercultural Research Certification Program.

IA global consultation was launched to find the name "Wodum" for the Indigenous Women's Global Watch against Violence.





Voices for Advocacy

"May this General Recommendation enforce the ethical, moral, and political obligations of the member States, and may all our diversities be represented in it."

Tarcila Rivera Zea
President
FIMI General Assembly

"When people look at us, they often think that we don't have skills, but we do. As Indigenous Women, we are moving ahead and we have to work together."

Lucy Mullenkei
Vice President
FIMI General Assembly

"The Recommendation must be understood through the lens of the Indigenous Peoples' worldview and spirituality. It has been redacted by Indigenous Women for the UN to recognize their individual and collective rights."

Gladys Acosta
President
CEDAW Committee 2022

The Road to GR39: Advocacy and the Strength of Indigenous Women



We Indigenous Women understood that we had to get organized to walk together and exercise our social and political influence in different strategic spaces, from the local to the global levels.

Indigenous Women's movements around the world face different forms of historical discrimination and oppression, which combine and overlap. Over the last two decades, standing tall and with our heads held high, the International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIMI) and other regional women's networks have been working for the recognition of our rights as well as our specific demands as women of Native Peoples.

It was an arduous path that finally led us to the approval of CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 for Indigenous Women and Girls (GR39), a binding

international instrument for the protection of our individual and collective rights. We had to learn to use the political spaces and explore other internal dynamics in order to generate different opportunities and fight against the systematic violations of our rights.

Indigenous Women experience physical, spiritual, economic, environmental, and sociocultural violences. Rape, mutilation, child marriage, employment discrimination, barriers to accessing education, desecration of sacred spaces, and expropriation of land are but some of the violations of rights that we have to face on a daily basis. To resist these violences, IIMI has decisively addressed the international community to demand that the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Women and Girls be recognized. Through the mechanisms and procedures of the UN, we intend to uphold the status of Indigenous Women, inside and outside of our communities.

About the birth of a collective dream

We began our advocacy work in 2004, when the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues¹, driven by the Indigenous Women's movement, recognized for the first time that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) made no reference to Indigenous Women in particular or paid

attention to our specific challenges. This first recognition, as the Convention—despite being the first instrument to explicitly recognize the systemic disadvantage women faced—had not considered the different forms of discrimination that Indigenous Women experience due to their sex, gender, or place of origin or belonging, nor the complex issues that arise from such discrimination.

In 2004, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recognized for the first time that CEDAW made no reference to Indigenous Women or paid attention to our specific challenges.

The Permanent Forum thus promoted a specific recommendation focused on the issues of Indigenous Women. This recommendation would bind UN Member States to implement targeted policies and programs, and pass budgets focused on the effective protection of our rights.

After nine years of cementing and managing collective strategies across the seven sociocultural regions of the world, in order to inform and collect inputs that would help the Indigenous Women's movement to name our priorities, in 2013 was held the Encuentro Internacional de Análisis y Profundización de la CEDAW (International Gathering for the analysis and further development of CEDAW), with the participation of the Ixpop Collective

with the organizations Sinergia No'j and Tz'ununija'.

We Indigenous Women understood that organizing was the most notable form of collective action on behalf of our people, and that we had to walk together to exercise our social and political influence in strategic spaces, from the local to the global levels. Thus, in the fight against the different violences that we face, we would achieve the impossible: to bring about a General Recommendation for Indigenous Women. This Recommendation would allow us to be present at community assemblies held in our territories, to bring our own proposals to the national governments, and to exercise our influence and contribute to international arenas such as the UN.

The validation of a General Recommendation for Indigenous Women would allow us to be present at the community assemblies held within our territories, to ensure that our proposals reach the national governments, and to exert our influence in international arenas such as the UN.



In 2015, two years after validating that specific recommendation, FIMI launched a global consultation that produced a political position paper² and a formal letter.

This letter—addressed to the experts of the CEDAW Committee—demanded that the national states, the United Nations agencies, the private sector, and civil society all reinforce their actions focused on the priorities of Indigenous Women, Youth and Girls, as well as of Indigenous Women with disabilities.

In 2017, the Ixpop Collective³ presented a formal request to the CEDAW Committee to start working on the General Recommendation. This would allow for the ratification of human rights legal instruments and for the effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)⁴, at the national and international levels. Technical and financial resources were dedicated to the adoption of more effective measures in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Women, in order to protect, promote and fulfill our human rights and fundamental freedoms.

²FIMI, ECMA, CONAMI, AIWO. "Global Positioning of Indigenous Women for the Generation Equality Forum and Beyond." Available at: <https://fimi-iiwf.org/biblioteca-propias/positionamiento-politico-fgi/>

³Ver: <https://ixpop.gt/>



In 2015, FIMI carried out a global consultation that produced a political position paper. In 2017, the Ixpop Collective presented the formal request to the CEDAW Committee to start working on the General Recommendation.

It was essential for us to promote the adoption of the new Recommendation and to increase the political participation of women in decision-making and in the creation, execution and monitoring of policies, as well as in those large development projects that have a direct impact on the land and territories.

To achieve this, FIMI and the regional networks—together with the organization Madre—launched the CEDAW for Indigenous Girls and Women: walking together towards change campaign, which would invite more women from the Indigenous Peoples to contribute information that would help us complete the final draft of General Recommendation 39.

2022, the year of Indigenous Women

In March 2022, after the efforts made by Indigenous Women networks to face the coronavirus pandemic, and within the framework of the sixty-sixth period of sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66), we carried out a side event titled Contributions towards the next General

Recommendation of the CEDAW on Indigenous Women and Girls, co-sponsored by the National Women's Institute of the Government of Mexico, FIMI and UN Women. At the meeting, we defined the guidelines that would serve as a foundation for the global consultation, the alliances, and the right tone to achieve a historical and strategic Recommendation for the protection of the individual and collective human rights of Indigenous Women.

Two months later, in May, the CEDAW Committee held regional consultations in the Americas, Africa, Asia, the Arctic and the Pacific. The first of them was held in Mexico among experts from Abya Yala, members of the CEDAW Committee, UN Women and UNICEF, and government representatives. At that meeting, more than 50 Indigenous Women, belonging to 42 different Indigenous Peoples from 22 countries, reflected on the challenges we face in our communities, and on how the Recommendation project would force UN Member States to bridge the gap between the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the violations of said rights that we experience in every country.

In March 2022, we held the event titled *Contributions towards the next General Recommendation of the CEDAW on Indigenous Women and Girls*. In May, the CEDAW Committee held regional consultations in the Americas, Africa, Asia, the Arctic and the Pacific.

At that time, the General Recommendation project was underway and was being developed collectively. Every day, the voices of more women and youths from Indigenous Peoples were joining in to carry out the decisive task that would contribute to improving the lives of 400 million Indigenous Girls and Women around the world, something we could only achieve collectively.

In June 2022, a delegation of 30 women leaders participated in CEDAW's 82nd session in Geneva, Switzerland. We conducted a first reading of the draft of GR39, including the contributions of the Indigenous Women's movement. On that occasion, the Committee

acknowledged that the Recommendation would represent a response to a historical debt owed to us.

Finally, and after a long and arduous process of management, drafting and consultations, on October 26, 2022, the CEDAW Committee approved General Recommendation 39.5 in a historical event. Once adopted as part of the Convention, it becomes a binding instrument for the party States. This means that national states, in their periodic reports, will have to be accountable for the specific measures implemented to respond to what is established regarding the rights of Indigenous Girls and Women.

⁴ ONU. "Declaración de las Naciones Unidas sobre los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas". Disponible en: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/DRIPS_es.pdf

In June 2022, a delegation of 30 women leaders participated in CEDAW's 82nd session in Geneva, Switzerland. After a long and arduous process of management, drafting and consultations, on October 26, 2022, the CEDAW Committee approved General Recommendation 39.



For the first time, organized women will have a tool to apply pressure on the States and demand public policies and budgets that truly address our needs and demands. This expands our active role as agents of change. GR39 also addresses the different forms of intersectional discrimination frequently committed by governmental and non-governmental agents, as well as our key role as leaders, carriers of knowledge and transformers of culture within our families, villages, and communities.

From now on, GR39 must guarantee our rights to self-determination and autonomy; to the integrity of our

lands, territories and natural resources; to justice, and to a life free of gender-based violence. It also supports our right to health, ensuring the recognition of the indigenous health systems, knowledge and practices; to participation in political and community life; to food and water security; to our cultural integrity and survival; and to quality education that is sensitive to our cultures.

We are not alone. If any of these rights are violated in a given community, Indigenous Women can resort to the Recommendation 39. Not only as a legal tool, but as an instrument of collaborative resistance.

⁵ OHCHR. CEDAW/C/GC/39: "General recommendation no. 39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls", OHCHR, October 26, 2022 Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-recommendation-no39-2022-rights-indigenous>

An instrument for our struggle

Different stories of Indigenous Women and Peoples show how GR39 could be used in the defence of our individual and collective rights. Here are some of them.

Defenders of the Land, Guardians of the Culture and Identity of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Women are criminalized for defending the land of their communities against dispossession and exploitation by States and businesses. CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 provides a legal framework that protects Indigenous Women and guarantees their rights to land.

Since she was a young girl, Joan Carling, an indigenous leader from the Philippines, understood that Indigenous Peoples have a special relationship with land. Joan grew up in a mixed community among indigenous and non-indigenous families, so she was able to see the differences between her community and the rest of Filipino society. For the Kankanaey, the indigenous community she belongs to in the northern part of the Philippines's Cordillera, the land is collective and inherited by men and women equally. Forests are subject to group norms and people help each other in

times of crisis. Much more than a mere natural resource or commodity, land is the basis of a community's culture, identity, well-being and cohesion, a concept that unites Indigenous Peoples spanning from the Americas to Asia.

For Carling, when she was a child, the pine forest was her playground. "During my childhood, we hung from trees, we collected pine cones to collect the pine nuts and reforest the land, and on rainy days we went to forage for mushrooms," she recalls with the voice of someone remembering happy times. But Joan soon understood that if she did not fight for and defend the land, it was going to be taken away from her, because her community lived in a region rich in gold. The same company that exploited the forest where she grew up had expropriated an area of collective land to extract gold, copper and magnesium. The land had been completely destroyed: groundwater and rivers were contaminated, and the very ground, disturbed by mining, was collapsing beneath their feet.



Joan Carling has been defending the land rights of Indigenous Peoples for more than 20 years.



During her university years, Carling joined the struggle of the Kalinga People against the construction of a hydroelectric dam that was going to disrupt their ways of life. Although resistance was met with bloodshed and imprisonment, the Kalinga People managed to stop the dam project. This was a hallmark in the defence of indigenous land in the Philippines, as it demonstrated that resistance produces results.

Since then, Carling has spent more than 20 years defending the land and human rights of Indigenous Peoples, a career for which she was awarded the 2018 Champions of the Earth award, the United Nations' most important environmental recognition. To be effective in defending the land, Carling advises good community organization, including female leaders, creating alliances with a diversity of actors (communities, academics, local governments), and not letting companies set foot on the land of Indigenous Peoples. "Once they get in, it's much harder to get them out," she warns

The struggle of the Amazigh People for collective land in Morocco

In Morocco, Amina Amharech, activist and indigenous leader, faces the Moroccan government's latest attack on the Amazigh People's notion of collective land. The Amazigh, also known as Berber, are a people and linguistic community that inhabit

the desert highlands of North Africa. In 2019, three laws were approved that destroyed the inalienable rights protecting collective land in Morocco, which could not be sold, transferred or rented. Only the State could acquire land, after proving that it would contribute to the community's well-being.

According to Amina, these laws hide the State's clear intention to usurp collective land, which still covers most of the country. "The French eliminated the Amazigh customary right to land, the *Izarfan*, which guaranteed equal access for everyone to land and natural resources. But the settlers could not completely destroy the Amazigh's relationship to land. We preserve our forms of community governance, decision-making processes in which women are included, and methods of food sovereignty," explains Amina. The Moroccan State, by eliminating the French protectorate laws of 1919, has taken yet another step in the dispossession of the land of Indigenous Peoples.

The cultural foundation of the Amazigh People: women, language and territory

Amina associates the new laws on collective land with the fundamentalist Arabization project that seeks to undermine the leadership position of Amazigh women within their communities. "During my childhood, women were very present. I saw how they could give their opinion and participate in debates without being discriminated against. They are the centre of the family and the community; they are the ones taking care of the children and the home, but they also preserve the land and ancestral knowledge," says Amina. The word *Tamazigh* means "language", "territory" and "woman" at the same time. It is a very symbolic term in the Amazigh worldview, referring to the matrilineal structure of this people. However, in the 1980s, the rise of radical Islam has negatively impacted the freedoms and social position of women in Morocco.

"During my childhood, women were very present. [...] They are the centre of the family and the community; they are the ones taking care of the children and the home, but they also preserve the land and ancestral knowledge," says Amina Amharech.



Patriarchal characteristics can be seen in the reaction that the new laws on the land have provoked. By renaming the collective land as *soulaliyates* (the feminine form of "descendant"), the Moroccan State has alienated men from women, leading the former to think that the women will be the ones inheriting the land. However, the exact opposite is true. "Such are the consequences of a simple name change, showing how weak the position of women on land is," concluded Amina.

Criminalized for defending the land

Both Joan Carling and Amina Amharech have taken great risks to defend the land of their Indigenous Peoples against expropriation by the State or extractive companies. In the years that Carling worked for the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, she was labelled a terrorist, along with other activists. During that time, she received numerous threats and four of her colleagues were murdered. The pressure on her life and that of her family was such that, in 2006, she decided to take a break and get away from the risk zone by joining the Oak Institute for Human Rights Scholarship Program.



Both Joan Carling and Amina Amharech have taken great risks to defend the land of their Indigenous Peoples against expropriation by the State or extractive companies.

Amina Amharech, for her part, experienced first-hand the corruption of the Moroccan state and judicial system when her family's land was expropriated for being Amazigh. When she tried to take the case to court—the law still protected collective land then—, she did not find any lawyer willing to defend her.

Every time the Amazigh People stage a protest, the leaders are arrested and imprisoned. "We have no protection whatsoever. That's why I looked for an alternative in the international arena," claims Amina. She participated in the United

Nations scholarship program for indigenous representatives and has since been a pioneer in taking up the struggle of the Amazigh People to the United Nations.



A new legal framework for the defence of land for Indigenous Women

In CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 on Indigenous Women and Girls, Amina sees the possibility of protecting the rights of her people, and especially those of women, from a State that deliberately violates said rights. However, she insists that for the Recommendation to make its way to the communities on the ground, prior communication and awareness-building must be done. "We have to teach the women how to use these mechanisms," she says.

According to Joan Carling, the danger is to see the Recommendation become a dead letter. To avoid this, a process of accountability should be established, whereas the States would impose sanctions on those breaching human rights. In any case, both women consider that CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 is a milestone in the history of the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls over land.

To learn more...

If you are interested in reading more of these stories, we invite you to visit the section of FIMI's website on CEDAW's General Recommendation 39:

From land to body: forms of violence and discrimination against Indigenous Women

Although the Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination is recognized by the UN, it is a right that is systematically violated by the States. CEDAW's General Recommendation for Indigenous Women and Girls can become the binding instrument that forces States to respect it.

<https://cedaw.fimi-iiwf.org/2022/08/11/de-la-tierra-al-cuerpo-for-mas-de-violencia-y-discriminacion-contras-las-mujeres-indigenas/>

How to become an Indigenous Woman leader: the experience of Lea Nicholas-Mackenzie

Lea MacKenzie, known as the "Warrior Princess" of Canada, has fought her entire life for the rights of Indigenous Women at the national and international levels. She believes that CEDAW's General Recommendation is the instrument that will have the power to persuade States to enact tangible and effective change.

<https://cedaw.fimi-iiwf.org/2022/08/03/como-convertirse-en-lideresa-indigena-la-experiencia-de-lea-nicholas-mackenzie/>

Las Mujeres y Pueblos Indígenas no solo nos enfrentamos a los impactos del cambio climático, sino también a la expropiación y explotación de nuestras tierras y recursos naturales.



Indigenous Women Are Part of the Solution to Climate Change

Si bien hemos sido históricamente marginadas de los espacios de decisión, nuestros aportes como guardianas de la biodiversidad deben ser incluidos en la acción climática. La Recomendación General 39 de la CEDAW para Mujeres y Niñas Indígenas es un instrumento clave para lograrlo a nivel nacional e internacional.

Although we have historically been cast away from decision-making spaces, our contributions as guardians of biodiversity must be included in climate action. CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 for Indigenous Women and Girls is a key instrument to achieve this at the national and international levels.

The ice from the Himalayan mountains is melting, giving way to torrential rains and floods. The rising sea levels flood the Pacific islands. Drought cracks open the earth and withers the orchards in East Africa; fires and deforestation destroy the trees of the Amazon. The

climate crisis affects us all, but not in the same ways.

Indigenous Women and Girls depend on Mother Earth for their survival. In Her, we find the food to nourish and heal our families, the materials to build our houses, and the water to drink and wash ourselves. Furthermore, some of us live in territories that are more vulnerable to extreme climate events. "We carry multiple burdens, but our support is crucial," insists Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, from the Kankana-ey Igorot community in the Philippines, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The climate crisis affects us all, but not in the same ways. Indigenous Women and Girls depend on Mother Earth for their survival.

However, Indigenous Women have historically been kept on the margins of the spaces for decision-making and political participation, where solutions are developed and where policies and financing mechanisms to stop climate change are established. "Although

we have seen progress in the last 40 years, we need to increase our presence in international spaces so that our specificities are recognized and our capabilities can be seen as a part of the solution," claims Tarcila Rivera Zea, Quechua activist and president of FIMI.



Indigenous Peoples preserve 80% of the planet's biodiversity

According to the UN, Indigenous Peoples are the custodians for 80% of the planet's biodiversity, and many communities live in megadiverse countries. Thanks to the cultural and spiritual connection that we maintain with the land, Indigenous Peoples are also the guardians of nature, and we protect and defend it through our collective leadership.

In this regard, Indigenous Women play a crucial role as guardians and practitioners of ancestral knowledge, and as creators of new proposals for environmental sustainability. "We actively care for indigenous seeds, biodiversity, food security, and the well-being of our communities," explains Naw Ei Ei Min, Indigenous Woman from Myanmar and member of the Executive Council of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP).

The impact of climate change and of environmental violations against indigenous territories

Indigenous Women and Peoples not only face the impacts of climate change, but also the constant threat of expropriation and exploitation of our lands and natural resources that come with the advance of extractive companies in the name of economic development.

For example, the indigenous communities of Nepal—the tenth country most affected by climate change in the last 20 years—are seeing the Himalayan ices melt at unprecedented speeds. This phenomenon is in turn causing a radical change in the rain cycle. "We no longer see a difference between winter and summer. Now we have the monsoon all year round, bringing heavy floods on the riverbanks where the Indigenous Communities live," warns Pratima Gurung, indigenous activist and academic from Nepal specializing in the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, gender and disabilities, and Secretary General of the National Indigenous

Disabled Women Association-Nepal (NIDWAN) and of the Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network (IPWDGN).

At the same time, the expropriation of indigenous lands for the construction of hydroelectric plants and the intensive use of pesticides have impacted the availability and quality of water for the worse. All of this has a devastating impact on Indigenous Women, especially those with disabilities. "The lack of nutritious food and clean drinking water impacts our health and hygiene. This leads to a higher prevalence of people with different disabilities in our communities," adds Gurung. For this reason, in addition to Indigenous Women in general, she calls for Indigenous Women with disabilities to be specifically mentioned in the agreements on climate action.



Teachings and best practices for sustainable development

En Aotearoa (Nueva Zelanda), las Comunidades In Aotearoa (New Zealand), Indigenous Communities are also facing the impacts of climate change and deforestation, which are affecting their access to water and other natural resources. To respond to these challenges, with the help of Tui Shortland, director of Awotea Organics and member of the executive committee of Cultural Survival specializing in the ancestral knowledge of biodiversity, the communities of Aotearoa are designing books and digital tools based on the traditional Maori ecological knowledge as well as biocultural health indicators. The Maori live in connection with the water element from birth; they consider it a living being and the love child of father sky and mother earth. By fighting for their rights, the Maori have managed to have their indigenous worldview incorporated into regional water management policies, which are now more respectful of the natural water cycles. This allows us to protect the environment and the biodiversity of ecosystems.

"If they gave us the space we are entitled to, the world would be different, with a broad, collective, circular and diverse vision," suggests Teresa Zapeta, Mayan woman and FIMI's Executive Director.



Recommendations for the effective inclusion and participation of Indigenous Women in climate action

Indigenous Women ask for their full inclusion and participation in decision-making and in the development of public policies for climate action. To this end, in 2022 we have been active at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66), which promoted the consultation process leading to the adoption of GR39, as well as policies and programs on climate change, the environment and sustainable development with a gender perspective. We were also present in spaces such as the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP27). It is precisely in these arenas where we must take our place as guardians of the planet's biodiversity, and where our contributions and knowledge must be included as part of the solutions.

At the same time, it is imperative to ensure that the financing made available through the Paris Agreement to curb climate change can make its way to Indigenous Women and their communities, given that we face numerous barriers to receiving financial support. These barriers include the use of colonial languages and Western banking systems, impossible requirements to register our organizations and implement programs, and a general lack of support.

For all this, Indigenous Women have been fighting for years to have our rights recognized at the international and national levels. Today we reach the final stretch of a collective journey that reached its turning point with CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 for Indigenous Girls and Women. In this Recommendation, the introduction of the concept of environmental justice to guarantee our rights to land, territories and natural resources was key. This will force the signatory States to comply with the principle of free, prior and informed consent, and to include us in national public policies for effective action.

It is only with the contributions of Indigenous Peoples and Women that we might bring about a different world. This is a world in which forests and water are preserved and mother earth is respected; an environment where solidarity prevails over individual benefit, the community over the individual, and diversity over the cultural assimilation that creates falsely homogeneous societies.





Leadership Tools

"Preserving oral history is imperative to help future generations understand their past; otherwise, if it cannot be transmitted, especially through indigenous oral tradition, then it will be difficult for them to know how things were. Their history will be like that of extinct animals."

*Rosemary Naiputari,
Ogiek People*

"My fellow women, congratulations for being brave, staying with this process and successfully completing it. Given the multiple responsibilities we have at home, it was not easy. May Baba Dummad (the Creator) guide each one of us on the path we have left to follow."

*Ilenia Maybeth Pérez,
Kuna People*

"The Global Leadership School has allowed me to gain more knowledge, wisdom, experience and interactions with other Indigenous Women [...] as well as ideas on how to make a difference for my community at the Permanent Forum."

*Margaret Super,
Rendille People*

Sharing Ideas as Sisters: Indigenous Women Training Ourselves to Defend our Rights

The ninth edition of the Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women keeps the same commitment to fostering strong and united leaderships, and to apply the acquired knowledge in community advocacy projects.



In Cameroon, the majority of Mbororo Indigenous Women do not have an identification card. Maimouna Oumarou has proposed that all Mbororo boys and girls in Douala obtain their ID and birth certificate, so that they can exercise their rights as Cameroonian citizens. In the Chichimeca Community of Guanajuato, Mexico, Nitzia Julieta Ruiz Zapatero has been committed to keeping the Úza language alive, encouraging the youth to use and practise their native language through a digital application.

In Nepal, Gurung Indigenous Women have limited access to basic justice. Kamala Gurung wants to train her colleagues as well as the Judicial Committee staff so that Indigenous Women can access justice without being discriminated against due to their identity or gender. In Sweden, Helene Lindmark and Erika Unnes are preparing a research project to educate the Sami People on the negative effects of the "green transition" and how it can submit their people to new forms of colonialism. In the state of Chuuk, Micronesia, the government is failing to protect Indigenous Women who are abused by members of their own family. Saramita Salle wants to mobilize her community to pass a law against family violence.

Nitzia Julieta Ruiz Zapatero, from the Chichimeca Community of Guanajuato, Mexico, seeks to keep the Úza language alive and promotes it through a digital application.



Kamala Gurung, from Nepal, develops a training so that Indigenous Women can access justice without being discriminated against.



These community projects are just a few of the 32 advocacy plans that came to be from the ninth edition of FIMI's Global Leadership School. Thirty-three Indigenous Women from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Arctic and the Pacific met virtually during the month of March 2022 to be trained in the exercise of their individual and collective rights, and on how to enforce them through international mechanisms. The training included five modules, and online participation at the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program of Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights.

The School gives its students the possibility of participating directly and immediately in the Permanent Forum, one of the three United Nations mechanisms dedicated to the specific issues of Indigenous Peoples. On this occasion, participants attended remotely, due to the measures still in place after the pandemic and to the difficulty of obtaining visas for the United States. Even so, they drafted a declaration that was presented under the umbrella of the Global Leadership School and that was read at the United Nations headquarters by N K Keny, who was able to attend the Forum in person.

"It was really helpful and encouraging to work together and share ideas as sisters. The knowledge and skills I have gained from the School represent a great step forward in my quest to put an end to gender discrimination in my community. It has also helped me make better sense of what happens to us around the world as Indigenous Women," said Margaret Super, from the Rendille Indigenous Community in Kenya. Now, Margaret wants to train Indigenous Women in her community to be leaders, so they can participate in democratic processes and in decision-making.

A stimulating educational experience

To support participants in the implementation of their advocacy plans, the Global School offers ongoing advice at the regional level through its academic advisors, and allocates specific funds to make the projects a reality. "The cornerstone of the experience for the sisters is the allocation of funds for their advocacy plans, which are each developed in a unique way. These funds allow them to carry out meaningful projects within their Indigenous Communities," claims Lisa Natividad, former participant of the School and current advisor for the Arctic and Pacific region.

Since 2020, more than 50% of the School's funds are allocated to the advocacy plans developed by the participants, as a way to develop a special focus on advocacy at the local level. In 2022, FIMI's Ayni Fund contributed \$29,581, mostly for the African and Pacific regions.



Lisa Natividad, former participant and current advisor in the Global Leadership School, highlights how the program promotes the development of meaningful projects within Indigenous Communities.



On the other hand, the School also plans to continue offering theoretical training on human rights and leadership, with the support of former participants who enlisted in the Human Rights Advocates Program at Columbia University (HRAP). From September 9, 2021, to April 12, 2022, three Indigenous Women leaders, along with three FIMI members and ten lawyers specializing in indigenous affairs, participated in the New York-based program.

"This was a very stimulating and deeply inspiring educational experience, which helped me build my capacities and my abilities to generate communication networks," acknowledges Aminatu Gambo, from the Mbororo People of Cameroon, who has participated in

this edition of the program at Columbia University. For Elvira Pablo, from the Mixe People of Mexico, the program has prompted her to reaffirm her commitment "with and for Indigenous Women and Girls". They, "like me, defend our rights across all spaces, whether locally or globally", says Elvira.

With this ninth edition, there are now 235 Indigenous Women leaders who have participated in the Global Leadership School and who continue to make an impact in their community as well as in international spaces. As Lisa Natividad says: "The Global Leadership School has contributed to the success of Indigenous Women around the world, and is a valuable resource for all Indigenous Women!"

Global Leadership School 2022:

5 regions, 33 participants



LATIN AMERICA

Silvia Angélica Xinico Ajú
Guatemala
Maya
Kaqchikel

Carolina Salazar
Crisancho
Colombia
U'wa

Julieta Maquera Llanqui
Peru
Aymara

Lucía Gómez Díaz
Mexico
Tsotsil

Samay Killa Pérez Terán
Ecuador
Kichwa

Doris Paineñil
Chili
Mapuche

Ileana Moya Obando
Costa Rica
Cabécar

Nitzia Ruiz Zapatero
Mexico
Hñähñü/
Chichimeca

Estela Aída Bejarano
Argentina
Kolla

Ilenia Maybeth Pérez
Panama
Kuna





ÁFRICA

Faith Nataya Sangingo
Kenya
Maasai

Karen Keruto Kiptoo
Kenya
Endorois

Margaret Super
Kenya
Rendille

Ba Maimouna
Burkina Faso
Fulani

Maimuna Umaro
Cameroon
Mbororo

Valerie Loloju
Kenya
Samburu

Rosemary Najputari
Tanzania
Ogiek

Naiyan Kiplagat
Kenya
Ogiek

Diana Naftal
Tanzania
Maasai

SharonNaini
Kenya
Maasai

ASIA

Binti Gurung
Nepal
Gurung/Tamu

Bidya Shreshtha
Maharjan
Nepal
Newa

Tamrelyne R. M. Momin
India
Garo

Kamala Gurung
Nepal
Gurung

Mayalu Lama Tamang
Nepal
Tamang

Rashmila Prajapati
Nepal
Newar

Trifonia Erny
Indonesia
Dayak Laur

NK Keny
India
Sumi



PACIFIC & ARCTIC

Kaaterina Kerekere
New Zealand
Maori

Saramita Salle
Micronesia
Chuuk

Erika Unnes
Sweden
Sami

Helene Lindmark
Sweden
Sami

Elyssa Santos
Guam
Chamoru



Webs of Knowledge: A Window into our Stories

The Webs of Knowledge, Demands and Dreams collection compiles the life stories of 43 Indigenous Women who participated in the Global Leadership School between 2013 and 2018.

In a world where the voices of Indigenous Women have often been silenced, FIMI set itself the colossal task of collecting inspiring stories from the day-to-day lives of 43 Indigenous Women from five regions of the world. All these women went through the Global Leadership School for Indigenous Women (GLSIW) between 2013 and 2018. Those years were the stage for the first five editions of the GLSIW International Program on Human Rights and Advocacy Strategies, a key proposal for leadership development.

The work to compile all the stories culminated in 2022 when FIMI released them as a collection of digital books, *Webs of Knowledge, Claims and Dreams*. Organized into four thematic volumes, this collection of stories works as a window into the experiences, struggles and triumphs of Indigenous Women. We delve into how these women have become leaders, carriers of wisdom and agents of change in their communities.

Since its inception in 2013, the GLSIW has positioned itself as a safe space where women leaders can develop their community projects, share knowledge and learn to use the international mechanisms of the United Nations or formulate public policies to assert their influence globally as well as locally. Some of the political leaderships that emerged during those years have been compiled in the first volume, *Indigenous Women Leaders Participating in and Leading Political Processes*.



The second volume, *Action and Education for a Life Free of Violences*, puts the spotlight on Indigenous Women who have dedicated themselves to the struggle for a life free of violences, with tools and protocols to defend themselves, for all of their peers. This is the case of Irene Serina Leshore, from Kenya, who became a leader in her community with the mission to eradicate the practice of female genital mutilation and defend the rights of Maasai Women and Girls.

Indigenous Women also stand out for our role as transmitters of knowledge, traditions and ancestral practices. The third volume of this collection, *Building Networks and Strengthening their Ancestral Culture*, presents Indigenous Women who promote the use of traditional language, arts workshops or embroidery projects, thus contributing to building and maintaining the identity and culture of their people.

Finally, in the fourth and final volume, *Defending the territory and biodiversity*, we see Indigenous Women as defenders of the land, the forests, the rivers and all the beings with whom they share their lives. In fact, Indigenous Peoples have been recognized as guardians of 80% of the planet's biodiversity, and Indigenous Women play a fundamental role in caring for the environment.

Below, we invite you to read a set of articles that compile some of the outstanding stories in this collection, preserving the memory of the Indigenous Women's Movement.



Recovering ancestral practices to preserve indigenous identity.



We are guardians of the planet's biodiversity.

Conducting advocacy work in regional, national and international political arenas is one of the best tools available today to ensure a future of peace and well-being for our communities.

Indigenous leaders participating in and leading political processes

Indigenous Women of the World Win the Global Agenda

Indigenous Women around the world are writing their history, from Africa and Asia, through the Arctic and the Pacific, all the way to the Americas. The road is filled with obstacles, the lessons learned are crucial: conducting advocacy work in local, national and international political arenas is one of the best tools available today to ensure a future of peace and well-being for our indigenous communities. In this context, our participation in the Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women is a fundamental

contribution to recognizing ourselves as agents of change.

We are guided by our vision and organization, and especially by our conviction to develop the resilience that we summon every day for the defence of our peoples, territories and environment, our ancestral cultures and our collective knowledge.

One of our priorities is the defence of girls and youth. Such are the cases of Esupat Ngulupa Laizar, from the community of nomadic pastoralists from Tanzania, Africa, and of Bouba Aei Satu, from the Mbororo People of Cameroon, who experienced child marriage firsthand. Through their representation, each of them promoted changes to eliminate harmful practices and promote girls' access to education.

Indigenous Women are also committed to defending the land and the environment. Like Maribeth Bugtong-Biano, from the Igorot People in the Philippines, who represents her community and carries the values of Inayan, a guiding principle that prioritizes helping her fellow community members and not harming the environment. "One woman cannot do this alone, we want to support each other and keep learning," she expressed, referring to her partnership with the Asian Indigenous Women's Network (AIWN) and the Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education (Tebtebba).

The same cause is embraced by the Chamoru Indigenous People and their leader, Lisa Natividad. Lisa was born in Guam, an island in the Western Pacific which politically is one of the 14 unincorporated territories of the United States, and where a military base handling toxic material was established for a long time. According to her worldview, the Earth and everything it produces belong to the whole world and to those who inhabit it. That is why she dedicated herself to activism and to working for the Indigenous Peoples.

Another of our demands is the defence of ancestral knowledge. As in the case of Fresia Paola Paineñil Calfuqueo, who defines herself as a "Lafkenche Mapuche woman, proud of [her] culture, apprentice and bearer of cultural knowledge, willing to continue soaking up [her] cultural knowledge and passing it on to the future generations".

Fresia lives in Carahue—the ninth region of Araucania, located in southern Chile—and is part of her community organization in Llaguepulli. She is part of the management and mutual support team, focusing on the sustainable ancestral economy, giving value to such practices as *trafkintu* (exchange of species and knowledge), in pursuit of *kume mogen* (Well-being) for the people of her community.

To discover the full stories of Esupat, Bouba, Maribeth and many others who, like them, have become activists for peace, the defence of the environment and the identity of their people, we invite you to read the first volume of our collection, *Webs of Knowledge, Claims and Dreams*.

Ancestral Cultures Are Key in the Construction of our Identity

Naming our children in our traditional language. Leading an arts workshop where grandparents connect with their grandchildren, recognizing each other as part of the same tradition. Working together with other women on a traditional embroidery project. Organizing groups of women entrepreneurs based on the principles of reciprocity and barter. Indigenous Women all over the globe have been deploying different strategies to defend our traditions and transmit our worldviews to future generations.

This can be seen through the experiences of Laura Vukson, a member of the Tlicho People in Canada; Theresa John, a Yupik Inuit woman in Alaska; Romba' Marannu Sombolnggi', of the Toraya People in Indonesia; and Antonia Zamora Garza, from the Nahuatl Tlaxcalteca People in the Mexican state of Tlaxcala.

All of these women are moved by the wisdom of our elders who, despite the conditions of exclusion in which they grew up and lived, continue to be a beacon

for the transmission of a philosophy based on a harmonious relationship with the earth and the natural world, understood as the source of all life and energy.



Indigenous Women deploy networks to share our ancient identities with new generations.

Laura was born in Ontario, Canada. The culture of the Tlicho people informs her life practises. She is the mother of two children whom she named in her traditional language. This means a lot to her and her family, as it helps preserve at the source part of the indigenous culture to which they belong.

When she was eight years old, because there was so much racism in her city, Laura was ashamed of being Indigenous. Despite this, she survived segregation and managed to recognize herself as part of an Indigenous People. Today, as the director of a training centre, she promotes the interventions of indigenous artists in remote communities in Canada to help children return to the values of their culture.

Theresa, Yupik woman, leader and wise protector of the values of her people, also recognizes the loss of traditional cultural practices and languages in her country. For this reason, she believes it necessary to share local, ancestral knowledge with children and prepare them to become better leaders of tomorrow.

Inspired by her grandmother, Theresa focused her leadership on finding ways to solve the social problems that affect her people. From the academic world where she works as a professor, she promotes the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, ensuring that students receive ancestral knowledge and get directly involved in the planning of rituals, dances, and songs in the region.

In the city of Rantepao, Indonesia, Romba has a similar

path to her peers from the Arctic and the Pacific. As part of the Toraya People, she comes from a family that maintains the local cultural customs and knowledge, and is respectful of the traditional rules that govern her community. The Toraya culture recognizes tangible symbols that represent authority and leadership, such as the name Tongkonan, which comes from the term tongkon, meaning "to sit". The Tongkonan house is the centre of government for the Toraya community, so it cannot be privately or individually owned. This house represents the ancestral heritage of each family member or their descendant. "I am grateful to come from the family of a community leader," she says.

"For me, there are two identities that meet, or intertwine. First, my identity as a woman, built since I was born, then my identity as Indigenous, with my own cultural practices, with a different identity," explains Antonia, from San Francisco Tetlanohcan, where her roots as Indigenous Woman are established.

As a leader of her community, Antonia promoted the recording of oral histories, where children get together with their grandparents to learn about what life was like before in the Nahuatl language. "That summer course was very nice and rewarding, because the children, who are now adolescents, were able to reflect on the community's culture," she recalls. She also worked with groups of women on the use of medicinal plants with ancestral recipes, and put forward an embroidery workshop in an effort to recover an art that was being lost in the communities.

"For me, there are two identities that meet, or intertwine. First, my identity as a woman, built since I was born, then my identity as Indigenous, with my own cultural practices, with a different identity," explains Antonia, Nahuatl woman.

Indigenous Women weave networks to share our ancient identities with the youth. The stories of Laura, Theresa, Romba' and Antonia—along with those of many other Indigenous Women committed to the

cultures of their ancestors—are told in the third volume of *Webs of Knowledge, Claims and Dreams*. We invite you to explore it.



Defending the territory and biodiversity

Caring for the Land and the Natural Goods: The Commitment of Indigenous Women

Bersiru, which can be translated as “helping each other”, is a deeply seated value of the Sasak People, in Indonesia. Part of what this value means is committing to collaborate with family and community for the next generation, without breaking the transmission chain of inheritance, from the elders to the youngest. It also means the urgent need to defend the land, rivers, forests and mountains, as part of an ancestral legacy. For this reason, Indigenous Women fight from within our communities to preserve the environment, protect our natural resources, and manage the consequences of climate change in the regions we inhabit.

An exemplary case of this is the work of Rohani Inta Dewi who, as a leader of the Sasak People, after studying International Relations, joined the network of defenders of the Cek Bocek community to protect its inhabitants from the growing presence of mining companies that cause social, economic and psychological damage to the population.

Rohani participated in the Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women and, in the context of the territorial advocacy plan that she had to produce, she carried out a proposal to curb the negative impacts of gold exploration by a multinational company on the livelihoods and cultural objects of her community. She was inspired by bersiru: “I am inspired by this value, wherever I am, wherever I go. It motivates me to be of service to others. For me, the best person is the one who can help others.”

Another positive experience is that of Chhing Lamu Sherpa, from the Sherpa People of Nepal. She defines herself as a guardian of the mountain, a role she learned from her ancestors, recognizing their wisdom to defend life in all its manifestations. She was born in Pinjuling Katne, Udayapur, and is a human rights activist and environmentalist. The example of perseverance of her mother, who was persecuted and arrested on the false accusation of tearing up a photo of the king, fills her with pride and encourages her to keep learning, working and leading our cause as Indigenous Women. “My mother was illiterate. She supported me because I had to fight against my family and my society in order to assume my leadership. Without her, I would not have succeeded,” she affirms.

Chhing went on to complete a postgraduate degree in Rural Extension and Women from the University of Reading, United Kingdom, and is now President of TEWA, a women’s philanthropic organization, as well as the founder of the Spirit of the Mountain East

organization. Like Rohani, her time at the GLSIW helped her empower her work and implement coordinated actions and fund management to gather indigenous knowledge related to food and practices on how to face climate change.

Wilma María Calderón Gostas, of Miskitu roots, from Honduras, followed a path similar to that of these women from the Sasak and Sherpa Peoples. She recognizes her identity as Indigenous Woman, from which she draws wisdom, strength, and spirituality, and which gives meaning to her life and strength to her leadership. Wilma was born in Puerto Lempira, in the department of Gracias a Dios, a place where the green-blue water of the sea feeds the spirit and life of the people. She grew up noticing how the Miskitus had different ways depending on whether they lived in Honduras or Nicaragua. As she understood by witnessing the events unfolding during her youth, people in the neighbouring country, because of the war, were more sensitive to the defence of human rights.

Wilma tells us of one of the elements that represent the philosophy of the Miskitu, the masta organization, which is a system that teaches the values of respect and solidarity, as well as models of resistance assumed by the leaders who are now organized in 12 territorial councils, giving strength to the fight.



The forests, the land, the knowledge and the mother tongue are elements that keep their culture and worldview alive, and that are present in the work of the leaders of the community.

The forests, the land, the knowledge and the mother tongue are elements that keep their culture and worldview alive, and that are present in the work of the leaders of the community. "As a tangible object of our Miskitu culture, I can say that this is what enables that mutual respect for us. The solidarity that exists within that fighting spirit for our common goods is what keeps us united in our territory," she says.

These stories show that caring for the land, mountains, rivers, and forests, as well as for the life of the communities that inhabit the Earth, is an urgent task for the world's Indigenous Women leaders. If you would like to learn about more experiences in the fight to promote the preservation of the environment and curb the impact of climate change, you can read the fourth volume of our collection *Webs of Knowledge, Claims and Dreams*.

From our library

Explore the stories and images shared in the four volumes of *Webs of Knowledge, Claims and Dreams* here:

<https://fimi-iiwf.org/biblioteca-propias/entramado-de-saberes-reivindicaciones-y-suenos/>







Networks for Well-Being

"Our territory is still beautiful because of what they have done: they have used the resources sustainably and this is what we are also trying to do."

*Judy Winter,
Wapichan People*

"We take care of the land because it gives us life, we live thanks to it. In turn, the right thing to do is to take care of the land."

*Rosabel Villalba Soto
and Edil Zenteno
Flores, Guarani People*

"We want to recover the practice of ancestral Aymara sports, such as reed raft racing and swan making, but we also include football. With this we want to reunite two different generations of the community, young people and wise old people."

Lucinda, Aymara People

The Power of Ayni: The *land, community* Project

Through the Ayni Fund, together with other organizations and institutions, FIMI supported Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean in projects to protect ancestral knowledge, incorporate new knowledge and consolidate food security.

"Why not grow our own food when it is so pure and free of agrochemicals and all that other stuff that produces so much illness?" asked Lucía, a member of the Lof Cayún that built a refuge to grow food, thousands of metres above sea level in Argentina.

Near the sea, in southern Chile, a group of leaders of the Mapuche Lafkenche People participated in various workshops to consolidate their historical-spiritual identity. In Verapaces, Guatemala, three communities of the Mayan Q'eqchi' and Poqomchi' Peoples joined forces to diversify their crops and promote food security.

These and other stories, inspired by the philosophy of Well-Being, are presented throughout the land, community project. Growing tomatoes, corn and cassava; fighting drought; preserving indigenous languages and traditional medicine; building a plant nursery; it is all about recovering ancestral knowledge and incorporating other sources of knowledge to live in harmony with nature and the cosmos.



*For communities, food security and self-sufficiency are vital.
(Photo: Catalina Juger)*



The Ayni Fund mobilizes and exchanges human, financial and material resources to support Indigenous Women's organizations and their communities with their educational and economic, environmental and social development projects.

Members of the Awajun, Guaraní, Mapuche Cayún, Mapuche Lafkenche, Maya Q'eqchi', Maya Peninsular, Maya Poqomchi', Pasto, Qom, Wampis and Wapichan Indigenous Peoples participated in the initiative. Together with local organizations, the communities worked on projects implemented by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), through the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF). FIMI supported these projects through the Ayni Fund, as implementing partner for Latin America and the Caribbean.

With the editorial coordination and authorship of the Dromómanos collective, FIMI developed a digital publication in which you can discover, in words and images, these stories of resistance and change. Here we share two of them, namely the experiences of communities of the Wapichan and Qom Peoples. You can access the whole FIMI publication here: <https://tierra.fimi-iiwf.org/en/land-community.html>

The Keepers of Knowledge

South Rupununi District, Region 9, Guyana

Text: Jorge Varela



"It is through language that we connect with other traditions like respect for the land, knowledge of how to use it, knowing the different seasons, knowledge of medicine, food, craft, and dance." Judy Winter, barely 18 years old, utters these words that summarize why she and her community defend their customs.

The depth of the words spoken by this young woman, despite her age, might astound many. But it makes perfect sense when Judy speaks about the project she has been working on. For over a year, Judy has travelled widely among the towns and villages of her home region, searching for elders and what she calls knowledge-holders willing to share with the youth who, Judy laments, have mostly forgotten.

Aishara Toon (Aishalton), Judy's hometown, is a community of approximately 1,200 people located in the South Rupununi region, named for a river of the same name that traverses the territory, in the southeast of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, a Dutch and then British colony until 1966. It is the central hub for 21 satellite villages that are mostly inhabited by the Wapichan, one of Guyana's nine indigenous communities.

Though some residents of Aishara Toon work for the government as teachers or nurses, and a few others own small businesses, the majority work in agriculture, fishing, and hunting. Historically, the Wapichan developed sustainable practices for harvesting sustenance from the forests, subtropical savannahs, and abundant streams and ponds that surround them. Still, Judy says: "We have been slowly losing our connection to our elders and their knowledge. Our territory is still beautiful because of what they have done: they have used the resources sustainably and this is what we are also trying to do."

The Wapichan People and their ancestors have occupied and used the land that they call Wapichan wiizi for generations. Their total population is estimated at around 13,000 people living on both sides of the Guyana-Brazil border. Fewer than 5,000 people speak Wapishana.

Judy is one of the six members of a local youth group selected by the South Central People's Development Association (SCPDA) to document the testimonies of their elders. They have taken their project to more than half of the satellite villages and expect to cover them all.

With the backing of the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) and the financial support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), through its Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) fund, the SCPDA facilitates dialogue between youths and the elders in order to promote the dissemination of ancestral knowledge among the new generations.

Judy and her companions collect stories, write them down and translate them into Wapishana (Wapichan language), in an attempt to bring the new generations closer to this language, since the majority now speaks English.

This work will lead to the publication of a book titled Wapichan Stories of the South Rupununi, the first of its kind in the history of the language, which will also be

published in English, distributed in schools and online, and promoted on the radio.

Through her work, Judy hopes to bridge the generational gap between Wapichan elders and youth, allowing her peers to see and understand the value of their ancestors, a difficult task knowing that their history has largely been erased.

The project is not just about sharing knowledge. It is about building a shared sense of belonging and pride and rejecting the deeply rooted belief that the Wapichan way of life is uncivilized or obsolete.

Learning about her community's past has inspired Judy to look to the future with determination. She is currently studying Human Rights in order to help secure her community's place in their territory and dreams about institutionalizing the lessons drawn from the project. "We have been given the opportunity to lay the foundation to keep Wapichan Communities strong," says Judy. Regarding the project, she adds: "It is to rekindle the passion within us. We know that the elders will not always be here, but we will be here. And when we are not here, our children will be."



Farming Is the Future

Boquerón Community, Urukuy-Las Palmas Community, Villa del Rosario, San Pedro, Paraguay

Text: Jorge Varela

Photographs: Mayell Villalba

On the left bank of the Paraguay River, in Villa del Rosario, department of San Pedro, are the Boquerón and Urukuy-Las Palmas communities. There, some 60 families are still trying to adapt to the changes that recent history has imposed on them.

The two communities belong to the Qom People, victims of the forced displacements of the 19TH and 20TH centuries, a period when nascent South American

national States had determined that the Indigenous Peoples were secondary citizens—if citizens at all—of the States they were determined to build.

In pre-Hispanic times and during the Spanish colony, the Qom ancestors roamed the region of El Gran Chaco, which today is divided between Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia, where they led a nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle as hunters and gatherers. They were accustomed to spanning long distances hunting for game throughout the year and to fishing several varieties of fish in the streams and rivers of the territory. They also collected fruit and honey when the season was right.

Little by little as borders were drawn through their territory without their consent, these hunter-gatherer communities lost the freedom to roam their own lands. Reduction of indigenous territory and displacement: these are the underbellies of the heroic official histories of modern South American states.

Those who remained in Paraguay were expelled from the Chaco by ranchers dedicated to raising cattle. Supported by the police, these ranchers excluded the Qom from the territory.

"Today, everything is privatized and there are too many prohibitions," laments Pedro Marengo Caballeros, who has served for 22 years as Qom leader of Villa del Rosario. The community is populated by the descendants of those who found refuge in this sector of the Paraguay River. The community's full name, Qom Bagia Loge Lacheg, means those who live by the river. Their traditional lifestyle, however, is currently impossible to practise.

Francisca Marengo rests under the carob tree that was planted by her mother. She had brought the seeds from the Paraguayan Chaco area. They produce a sweet pod that is also a powerful medicine for intestinal conditions.



Magdalena Ozuna, 56 years old. One of her main sources of income is the sale of hats and other traditional objects such as lampshades and

In 1994, the Paraguayan government recognized a patch of 154 hectares as Qom land, expanded thanks to community activism to 2,777 hectares two years later. "And they are lucky: there are communities that continue to be expelled to this day because they do not have the proper papers," says Augusto Fogel, director of the Agrarian Technology and Communitarian Organization Service (SATOC), a Paraguayan NGO that has worked with Indigenous Communities since 1990.



Cassava or yuca is an essential crop for the community.

Today, the Qom from Villa del Rosario live principally in two different villages within the territory that officially belongs to them: Urukuy-Las Palmas, with 37 families, and Boquerón, with another 26 families. Their main language is Qom Laqtaqa, but they also speak Guaraní, and Spanish as a third language.



"We don't want to lose our identity, which is the language," says Pedro Marengo.

They are now trying to heal the wounds of a violent past. The issue of food security is a particularly painful one. The historical trauma of being forcibly displaced from the territory is one thing, and forcing them to adapt to a completely different lifestyle is another altogether. As traditional hunter-gatherers and nomads, not farmers, the Qom could never fully adapt their nutritional practices to a forced sedentary way of life.

With the support of the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) and financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through its Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) fund, the community and SATOC launched an initiative in mid-2019 to combat this fundamental problem through the construction of a community plant nursery. A technical support was also provided to improve the community's agricultural capabilities and to diversify its diet.

As a result of the project, crops such as cassava, sweet potato, corn and garden vegetables have begun to be planted. Workshops on irrigation techniques that

allow the community to better cope with the periods of drought have also been given. For the time being, the focus is on improving the food security of the community, but the project will later seek to encourage the commercialization of products such as honey and yerba mate.

Pedro Marengo expresses his joy when he speaks about the project. As a community leader, he is mainly worried about two things: the people's diet and the education of their youth. The community's plant nursery is helping with both. Maybe young people will discover that staying in the community is also an option.

The project will also seek to work with schools to promote their culture and language, although this could not yet be carried out due to the delays brought by the pandemic. "We do not want to lose our identity, which is our language," says Marengo. Studies carried out by SATOC have demonstrated that the land is fertile. Pedro seems hopeful: "our future is in strengthening our agricultural knowledge".

Sports as a Tool for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women

Research on sports led by FIMI—and funded by the Ayni Fund and Women Win—shows that sports can foster leadership and help Indigenous Girls and Women eliminate gender stereotypes.

For centuries, sports have been considered a masculine and recreational activity. Women have been excluded from sports because they were usually played in public spaces, while the sexual division of labour relegated women to the home and to the work of caretaker. This gender gap—reinforced by colonialism—has affected Indigenous Women in particular ways.

Faced with such inequalities, Indigenous Women's organizations from Africa, Asia and Latin America have created spaces to promote women's sports—modern and traditional alike—in their communities. Beyond the physical benefits expected from practising any sports, these spaces generated positive results for women in cultural, social and political terms. In 2021, researchers Jenny Chicaiza and Ivonne Gaona—at FIMI's request—designed a research project using in-depth interviews to understand the link between sports and leadership development and empowerment. The results were overwhelmingly positive. Sports not only help give Indigenous Women visibility in the public space—thus contributing to the defence of their individual and collective rights—but also serve as a recreational "hook" to promote the education and training of Indigenous Youth.



"Sports helped them integrate better, participate more, feel confident in their bodies," says Leslie, from the AMA Association of Guatemala. Leslie and her colleagues have used the spaces opened up through sports in order to work to prevent early pregnancy and sexual violence against Indigenous Women and Girls. In Uganda, football has helped promote the empowerment of Indigenous Girls and Women, affording them time away from the home and their caregiving role, which has also helped prevent early marriages.

Similarly, in Bolivia, the women of the Aymara People of Pucarani see the playing field as more than just a space for sports. It is a place to gather, meet and learn, where they can create a safe space to share how they face gender violence. "These meetings help us socialize [...]. We are often closed off; in many families they say, 'why do you have to talk, what happens at home stays at home, you have to keep quiet...' But little by little we are raising our voices [...]", explains Lucinda, from the Cohana Aymara Women's Youth Centre.

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Furthermore, sports have helped strengthen intergenerational dialogues and give value to the Indigenous Peoples' culture, tradition and identity, through the recovery of ancestral games of Bolivia such as raft racing, spinning top or wool rope competitions. In Ecuador, the Ambi Grande Community has recovered the games of the chaski, the camote and the cogidas. According to Viviana, this has allowed them to demonstrate "that we exist, we are alive, we speak our language and we carry our traditions".

Sports give even better results for the empowerment of Indigenous Women and Girls: they give them the opportunity to question those deeply rooted gender stereotypes that link femininity with passivity and seclusion. It is not an easy thing to do. "A woman or girl who grabs hold of a fishing rod is considered a bad woman. Likewise, women cannot climb on the roof of a house when it is being built, and they cannot sow the fields, which would be considered taboo in some

communities. So when I see that women are playing hockey at the international level, I see them as an inspiration to do what has never been possible to do before," says Veronica, from the Samajik Seva Sadan Organization and the Odisha Indigenous Women's Forum, in India.

For her part, Aysha, from Cameroon, had to show a lot of determination and conviction when she stood up to her parents and her community so that she could pursue sports. "People still have this idea that it is not correct for such a young girl to start practising these types of sports. They think that they have to preserve some sort of dignity, an idea that is not compatible with certain types of liberties," explains Aysha. However, sports have changed Aysha's life: "The path I took has been very important for me; it has allowed me to learn about other cultures, know more about the world, and better develop my personality."

"Sports helped them integrate better, participate more, feel confident in their bodies," says Leslie, from the AMA Association of Guatemala.

Thus, sports emerge as a key tool for Indigenous Women's empowerment and leadership development, and to ensure they can live free of violence. The projects included in the research were funded by FIMI's

Ayni Fund in alliance with Women Win. The foundations are thus laid for future studies and projects focusing on sports as a cornerstone to achieve gender equality.

To learn more...

We invite you to explore the Sports for Indigenous Women's leadership development research, coordinated by FIMI and led by Jenny Chicaiza and Ivonne Gaona:

<https://fimi-iiwf.org/biblioteca-propias/practicas-deportivas-para-el-fortalecimiento-de-mujeres-indigenas/>







Spotlight on Cultural Diversity

"Promoting our own methodologies allows us to break with the idea that Indigenous Women can only receive information and concepts designed externally."

Dolores Figueroa Romero and Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor

"Intercultural research contributes to the training of young people, girls and boys, to gain awareness and transform their personal and collective environment for Well-Being."

Southern Diversity Studies Network

Different Ways of Knowing: Contributions to Intercultural Research from the Perspectives of Indigenous Women

A new work by FIMI draws from the visions and knowledge of Indigenous Women from Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In doing so, it offers a decolonized perspective on the world of research.

Based on a conversation between the women of her community and a spiritual authority, Alicia Izquierdo—leader of the Arhuaco People—developed a program on the rights of women and children: first looking at the spiritual dimension, then at the physical plane. The Nasa women realized that if they could protect their sacred sites from extractivism, war and other threats, then they too would be protected. They mapped these sites and documented their significance

by talking with the wisdom holders. Then, they analyzed the situation of women's rights. A group of Tuareg women gathered around weaving and embroidery and used the space to express their emotions and recover the history of their people. While meticulously working on the embroidery for their bed covers, they would talk about healing themselves.

These cases—all presented in the study Contributions to Intercultural Research from the Perspectives of Indigenous Women—demonstrate how an intercultural approach to research allows to delve deeper into what is most relevant to the lives of our communities. Through participatory action techniques, Indigenous Women reflect, dialogue and articulate concepts, all based on a deep understanding of our peoples.

It is about looking at the past to build the present and project ourselves into the future.



Within the framework of its research program, which was launched in 2013, FIMI generates contents that serve as a tool for the development and advocacy of Indigenous Peoples. As noted in the *Discovering and Learning from my Community* report prepared by FIMI in 2021, culture, worldview, languages, knowledge, spirituality and ancestral knowledge are all considered in producing such contents. The report suggests the establishment of a methodological laboratory for indigenous researchers to analyze and study their own realities, and to build their own methodologies and conceptual frameworks. The same report states that it thus seeks to decolonize the traditional ways of doing research, to promote dialogue and understanding.

Since the beginning of the program, the *Manual on Methodological Approaches to Intercultural Research* (2013) has served as the foundation of our work. The manual provides research tools from an intercultural perspective, informed by a focus on gender and human rights. It is the result of the joint effort of 35 Indigenous Women from Central America and Mexico.

Contributions to Intercultural Research from the Perspectives of Indigenous Women—published and distributed in 2022—is an update on the manual, including the visions and knowledge of Indigenous Women from Asia, Africa and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The material is the result of the systematization of FIMI case studies, presented with researcher Lorena López on March 1, 2021, and the work carried out in the workshop “Towards Intercultural Research: Webs for the Advocacy of Indigenous Women” (held on March 26, 2021). Both events were organized by the research program coordinator, Nadezhda Fenly.

The purpose of these new contributions is to identify the challenges faced by Indigenous Women in intercultural research processes. The goal is to understand the different contexts in which they live, and highlight the impact of their research at the regional, national and international levels. The publication represented a milestone for FIMI, as it was shared more than 3,000 times on social media, and it continues to arouse the interest of indigenous and non-indigenous researchers alike.

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The information is organized in four parts. The first, “Methodologies of Intercultural Researchers”, is a presentation of the different approaches of Indigenous Women to intercultural research, with the names of their methodologies. The second one, “Challenges”, presents possible applications for the results and the challenges that researchers must face to implement the proposed solutions. The third section, “Lessons learned”, highlights the experiences of Indigenous

Women that gave more strength to their intercultural research. Finally, “Recommendations” presents a list of suggestions to help promote the work of women researchers. Intercultural research is a decisive tool to consolidate the leadership of Indigenous Women, as it allows us to delve deeper into the recognition, memory and strategies to analyze information from their own perspectives. It is about looking at the past to build the present and project ourselves into the future.

A fundamental tool

We invite you to download *Contributions to Intercultural Research from the Perspectives of Indigenous Women. Methodologies, Challenges and Lessons Learned*. You can find the publication here:

<https://fimi-iiwf.org/en/biblioteca-propias/contributions-to-cross-cultural-research-from-indigenous-womens-perspectives-methodologies-challenges-and-lessons-learned/>



Wodum, the Indigenous Women's Watch Against Violences

In the year of the approval of GR39, we agreed upon an indigenous name for our Watch. A name that represents the spirit of our collective struggle.

Indigenous Women face all types of violences, both inside and outside our communities. We experienced domestic, physical and sexual violences, disappearances, femicides, trafficking for sexual exploitation, child marriage, among others. Compared to non-indigenous women, we have higher rates of gender violence, and barriers in our access to justice and preventive policies. For this reason, we needed an instrument that would allow us to transform this reality. An instrument to monitor compliance with international human rights commitments, and to raise awareness about the violences we experience.

The Indigenous Women's Watch against Violences was born in 2010 from the Second Meeting of Latin American Experts on Violence against Indigenous Women, held in Mexico. That same year, a group of experts also advocated before the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and achieved to include, within the official Recommendations, the need to have "a global monitoring mechanism led by Indigenous Women and dedicated to collecting, organizing and monitoring information on the violences against Indigenous Women and Girls, in order to give greater visibility to the problem and improve the advocacy work in favour of the adoption of political measures". The Recommendation was meant to encourage United Nations agencies to cooperate with each other, and to support the creation and consolidation of the Watch.

Wodum means "powerful women, power and spirit against violence, despair and weakness".

Twelve years later, in 2022, FIMI contributed to this mechanism with a public call to regional networks, organizations and Indigenous Women leaders across the world to present proposals for an indigenous name for the Watch. Today, it has a name: Wodum.

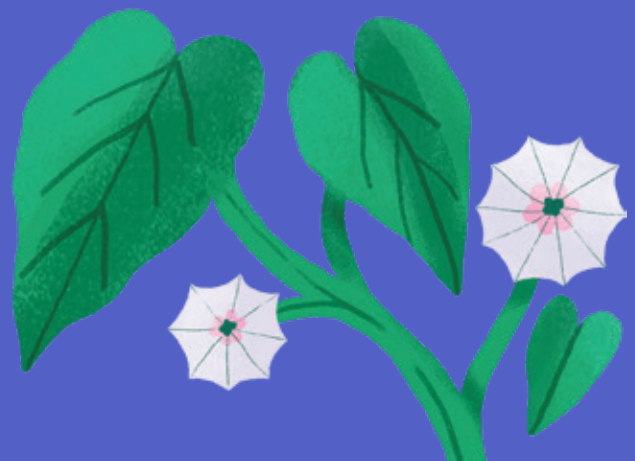
This word comes from Papora, an indigenous language spoken in Taiwan, a province of China. It means "powerful women, power and spirit against violence,

despair and weakness". With this name, we highlight the power of Indigenous Women to confront violences with proposals of their own anchored in their own worldview.

In 2022, four reports on violence against Indigenous Women were also produced, and the available information was updated in preparation to the launch of the Observatory through its website.



WODUM





Indigenous Women unite against violence.

To learn more...

You can find very valuable material developed by the Watch on the *Wodum* website.

The "Data by country" section includes an interactive map presenting information on the violences experienced by Indigenous Women around the world, and references on national legal and regulatory frameworks to address the issue. You will also find the

best practices to combat violences against Indigenous Women developed in each country.

The "International Data" section includes Conventions and Framework Agreements, Recommendations, as well as initiatives and best practices to end violence, led in this case by international networks and organizations.

In the "Reports and Studies" section, you can access different publications on the subject. We invite you to visit the website: <https://wodum.fimi-iiwf.org/en>

