

Nothing About Us Without Us



2023 YEARBOOK

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Honouring the past to build the future

Letter to our supporters

Over time, Indigenous Women have established strategic alliances to achieve our common historical goals, such as gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Every year, we thus reach new achievements in our defence against different forms of violence.

Today, we wish to celebrate the positive results achieved in 2023. As indigenous sisters, community leaders, activists and defenders, we have dedicated our time and energy to a shared mission: a world free of all forms of discrimination. A world where Indigenous Women can fully enjoy our individual and collective human rights and well-being.

In this 2023 Yearbook, you will find an account of the actions we have carried out around the world. We carried advocacy work in different strategic spaces for the implementation of General Recommendation 39 for Indigenous Girls and Women of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). These spaces included the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW67) and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). Additionally, we made our way to the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28).

In the following pages, you will also find details of our training plan for Indigenous Women from all over the world through the Global Leadership School—which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2023—, and the financial support provided by FIMI's Ayni Fund.

Moreover, you will find a report of the successful Gathering of Women Researchers Guardians of Ancestral Knowledge, where sisters of different Indigenous Peoples came together to discuss strategies for the promotion of an intercultural, decolonial research for political advocacy.

Every page of this edition is a reminder that together we are strong, and that our voices can and should be heard everywhere. I invite you to explore these achievements. You can be proud to be part of this community that works tirelessly to honour our ancestors, for the well-being of present and future generations.

Our struggle continues, and our commitment is unwavering. As we move into the coming year, let's focus our efforts on protecting and preserving the heritage of our communities.

Thank you for your dedication and solid commitment. Let's keep moving collectively towards a more just and equitable future for our indigenous sisters around the world.

Teresa Zapeta
Executive Director
International Indigenous Women's Forum



2023:

uniting our forces; adding our voices



We collaborated with Indigenous Women and Indigenous Women's Organizations of **5 regions of the world:** Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Arctic and the Pacific.



We developed **19 financing proposals** for the strategic and institutional strengthening programs. We established **22 agreements**.

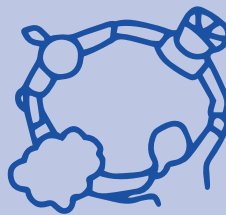


We concluded our first institutional narrative process. **We revamped our website.**



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND ADVOCACY

We intensified our actions for the adoption of **CEDAW's General Recommendation 39**.



We promoted the participation of **31 Indigenous Women leaders** and their organizations in **17 forums, meetings and global processes**.



FIMI was formally granted the **"observer" status at COP28**.





CAPACITY BUILDING

13 Indigenous Women leaders from the Arctic, the Pacific, Asia, Africa, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean participated in the **tenth edition of the Global Leadership School**.



FONDO AYNÍ



We received **452 project proposals**; **103** were approved. We directly reached **54,775 people**. **208 Indigenous Peoples** from **49 countries** benefited from the Ayni Fund.



RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

375 Indigenous Women were indirectly supported by FIMI's Research and Knowledge Exchange program.



16 Indigenous Women leaders from different regions participated in the Gathering of Indigenous Researchers Guardians of Ancestral Knowledge, in Panama.







Voices for Advocacy

"When a woman speaks, she is not just talking about herself. She speaks with the voice of her ancestors, she speaks with the voice of her lineage."

*Teresa Zapeta, Maya K'iche People,
FIMI's Executive Director*

"Indigenous People, especially women, must be included at all levels of the decision-making process to reflect their strengths, knowledge and cultural identities."

*Malarndirri McCarthy, Yanyuwa People,
Deputy Minister of Indigenous Health
of the Northern Territory of Australia*

CSW67: Strategic dialogue for the effective implementation of GR39

Indigenous leaders agreed on a global advocacy agenda with key stakeholders, member States, allies and mechanisms of the United Nations to ensure the proper use of CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 (GR39).



Gathering of Indigenous Women in New York - Photo by Christopher Muncy

The International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) and the Indigenous Peoples and Development Branch of the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (IPDB/SPFII) convened a strategic dialogue to expand the reach of CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 (GR39) and define next steps to ensure its implementation around the world. The dialogue took place on **March 10, 2023**, within the framework of the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) at the UN. **The event brought together indigenous leaders from regional networks in Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Arctic and the Pacific, government delegations, and donors, with the objective of discussing the achievements and challenges in the implementation of GR39, and the opportunity that this tool offers to put an end to the discrimination faced by Indigenous Women and Girls.**

At the opening of the meeting, **Tarcila Rivera Zea**, Quechua from Peru and FIMI's President, insisted that the foremost challenge for the actual application of the Recommendation will be to make sure the member States develop public policies that contribute to the individual and collective empowerment of Indigenous Girls and Women around the world. **"The implementation will not be easy. We have worked hard and in solidarity at the local, regional and global levels, touching the hearts and minds of key decision makers to ensure the rights of women and girls are protected,"** she said.

Senator **Malarndirri McCarthy**, Yanyuwa woman from Australia and Deputy Minister for Indigenous Health in the country's Northern Territory, declared having experienced violence firsthand as a woman. **"Indigenous People, especially women, must be included at all levels of the decision-making process to reflect their strengths, knowledge and cultural identities,"** she claimed. She explained that the implementation of GR39 in Australia will be done **"through the creation of a permanent advisory body, which will advise Parliament on the issues that impact this sector."** She further declared: **"We will be working in partnership with political actors and the donor community to achieve key economic and social reform objectives to bridge the gaps as part of our national agreement."**



“ We have worked hard and in solidarity at the local, regional and global levels, touching the hearts and minds of key decision makers to ensure the rights of women and girls are protected,” said Tarcila Rivera Zea.

Haley Bathern, a young Anangu woman from Australia and a teacher at a local Indigenous Girls' school, expressed her gratitude for this dialogue: **"There is no better space to promote the implementation of GR39, which will serve to maintain the connection of young women with their ancestral knowledge, work towards their recognition of their rights, and build spaces where they feel accepted, financially independent, and able to generate change in their communities."**

Participating in the event remotely, **Leticia Bonifaz**, expert of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), pointed out that **"it is impossible to imagine a world where the ancestral customs and worldviews of the First Peoples and communities are not recognized and valued."** In this regard, she said, the Recommendation has historical significance, and was built upon the discussions held by Indigenous Women from different parts of the world. They reflected on key issues such as education, health, work and economic empowerment, using a transversal approach to bring together the voices of women with disabilities, LGBTI+, migrants or those who are deprived of liberty.



“The authorities are determined to ensure that the Australian Parliament works together with Native Peoples to improve their lives,” declared Malarndirri McCarthy.

Beatrice Duncan, Rule of Law Advisor and Focal Point on indigenous issues at UN Women, explained that after the adoption of GR39, all member states will have four years to submit a report for the Committee to evaluate the reach of the Recommendation in the daily lives of Indigenous Women. As she clarified, the reports will have to describe the measures taken, and the Committee may request that additional information be provided whenever it deems it necessary, in order to know how the rights affirmed in the Recommendation are being fulfilled, including collaboration strategies with Indigenous Women's organizations at the national level.



Mariam Bouraima, Fulani woman from Benin and a member of the African Indigenous Women's Organization (AIWO), insisted that **“the member states should take action to end discrimination and, through the application of GR39, involve women in decision-making bodies.”**



In her intervention, **Erika Unnes**, an activist from the Saami Women's Forum, stated that, although there have been several earlier international agreements aimed at protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples in general, and of Indigenous Women in particular, there are still regulatory gaps that keep blocking their access to food security, to the natural resources of their communities, and to their cultural identities. All of this is manifested through the ongoing dispossession of their languages, lands, territories and natural resources. For this reason, according to Unnes, GR39 represents **“a new starting point for all women fighting for the defence of these rights, whether they live in rural or urban settings, to be aware of all the legal and administrative resources available for them.”**



Talking of how the Ford Foundation can collaborate with Indigenous Women's movements to promote the implementation of the Recommendation, **Monica Alemán**, Director of the International Program on Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Justice, explained that to implement GR39, the Ford Foundation **“will allocate greater and better resources”** to Indigenous Women's organizations and other groups, so that international norms can become local realities and not just faraway dreams. **“It is important to initiate and maintain an open ongoing dialogue with the International Indigenous Women's Forum, so as to keep identifying new partners for the allocation of financial resources,”** she added.

Alemán pointed out that **“one of the decisions we have made is to offer political support to the Indigenous Women's movements that we are supporting financially.”** This opens an important opportunity, for the organizations that already receive support from the Foundation to actively participate in the discussions and to define the direction they want to take with their counterparts or other donors.



According to **Eleanor Dictaan-Bang-oa**, Kankanaey Igorot woman from the Philippines, from the Asian Indigenous Women's Network (AIWN), the Recommendation includes important reflections on the issues of equality and non-discrimination, with special attention to the intersecting forms of discrimination. **“As Indigenous Girls and Women, we experience intersectional forms of violences that are embedded into the very structures of the colonizing States, systematically affecting our ability to exercise our individual and collective rights,”** she highlighted.



Patricia Torres Sandoval, a Purhépecha leader from Mexico and founder of the National Coordinator of Indigenous Women (CONAMI-Mexico), warned that in order for the Recommendation to be implemented efficiently and effectively, we will need **“political will and an adequate allocation of funds from the States and the donor community, so that programs and policies informed by the needs of Indigenous Girls and Women around the world can be built collaboratively.”**

Closing the event, **Gladys Acosta**, former president of the CEDAW Committee, **pointed out that this strategic dialogue highlighted the enormous potential of the Recommendation**, specifying that “the bulk of the responsibility to communicate GR39 in all languages through all the channels falls on the member States.” She also stated that **“this international instrument would have to be adopted by women’s organizations, institutions and key political actors in a collaborative and coordinated manner.”**

Nadine Gasman, President of Mexico’s National Institute for Women (INMUJERES), recognized that the biggest challenge for the different governments will be to ensure GR39 is made available in the languages of the Peoples and communicated broadly to the communities so that more women may take ownership of this tool for the protection of their rights from childhood.

“Institutional adoption of the Recommendation is key to achieve its effective application in institutions at all levels, whether federal, local, municipal or national. At INMUJERES, we are going to support this process to keep guaranteeing the full participation of Indigenous Women and Girls as protagonists within their communities as well as outside,” said Nadine.



“Gathering of Indigenous Women in New York
- Photo by Christopher Muncy.”

Another meeting in defence of our rights. Meeting with representatives from UN Women

Strengthening the alliance between Indigenous Women and UN Women is a top priority for FIMI, as is launching, among the women leaders and members that make up our community, a profound dialogue on the distribution of resources granted to human rights defence organizations. For this reason, **on August 24, 2023, we met virtually with representatives of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women**. This UN initiative is further strengthened with the recent adoption of CEDAW’s General Recommendation 39 (GR39).

The meeting was organized as a follow-up event to address the issues that arose from our recent Strategic Dialogue on GR39, which took place during the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) in New York.

For a full chronicle of the event, visit FIMI’s website:

<https://fimi-iiwf.org/en/noticia/to-fully-realize-our-rights-and-put-an-end-to-violence-indigenous-women-met-with-representatives-of-the-un-trust-fund/>

UNPFII: Indigenous Women discuss the effective implementation of GR39

At a side event at the 22nd UNPFII session, activists from different Indigenous Organizations discussed the implementation of GR39 for the defence of the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Women.

The 22nd session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) at the UN headquarters in New York was a key platform for us to meet with international institutions, UN agencies and Indigenous Organizations. **On April 17, 2023**, at a side event to this session, Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI), the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the Christensen Fund, the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University, the Indigenous Forum of Abya Yala, and the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) **met to make further progress in the implementation of CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 (GR39)**

The UNPFII is an advisory body that promotes the respect of and effective conformity to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This edition of the Forum proved to be of great importance in working on our common objective: to promote the use of this legally binding human rights instrument that contemplates the different dimensions of the discrimination suffered by Indigenous Women.

In the opening moments of the meeting, **Joan Carling**, Kankana-ey Igorot activist from the Philippines and IPRI's Executive Director, explained that the Recommendation addresses the individual and collective rights of

Indigenous Women, "specifically the issues and concerns of indigenous rights defenders, and recognizes the various risks and forms of attacks that they face when practising their subsistence activities, including access to and control over their lands and natural resources." The actual implementation is important, because it means the States have to ensure that rights defenders are not criminalized or subjected to reprisals for their work, she warned.

For her part, **Tarcila Rivera Zea**, FIMI's President and a Quechua woman from Peru, assured that there are great challenges to the adoption of the Recommendation. "We must work with our own organizations to make sure that the implementation does not only benefit girls and women; Indigenous Peoples must use it to drive a national policy that directly serves the communities," she said.





For Joan Carling, GR39 “specifically addresses , the problems and concerns of Indigenous Women defenders, and recognizes the risks [...] that they face when practising their subsistence activities, including access to and control over their lands and natural resources.”

In her opening address, Arhuaca leader **Leonor Zalabata Torres**, Colombian ambassador to the United Nations, affirmed that “social participation in the States’ decisions plays an important role for peace, the sustainable development of the earth, and the brotherhood and solidarity of the Peoples.” CEDAW’s Recommendation 39, she added, “allows us to decide how we want to live our cultures, in consensus and in unity with our realities.”

Gladys Acosta, former president of the CEDAW Committee, commented that “at a time when the forces of death seem to want to prevail, GR39 is a broad reflection on the rules of life and their prevalence.” What we have achieved with the Recommendation, working

with Indigenous Women and Organizations, she assured, “is to respectfully collect the worldview, the spirituality of the Peoples and to recognize the deep connection between their rights and the communities’ territories and natural resources.”

General Recommendation 39 “is a tool to use in our fight,” she said. “It insists on the obligation of the member states to provide access to education, health and political participation inside and outside the communities, urging them to take measures against gender violence, including those perpetrated by the State or associated organizations,” she also warned.

“ Social participation in the decision-making of the States plays an important role for peace, the sustainable development of the earth, and the brotherhood and solidarity of Peoples,” claimed Leonor Zalabata Torres.



Nukila Evanty, Executive Director of the Women Working Group (WWG), and Rosalee González, Co-Coordinator of the Northern Region of the Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Américas (ECMIA), agreed that structural racism aggravated by gender discrimination continues to be a daily reality for the Indigenous Girls and Women of the world. GR39 “responds to a permanent call from the First Peoples to create a specific instrument to promote and protect our rights. It represents a growing movement for greater inclusion while preserving the cultural identity of our peoples,” said González.

The Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, **Åsa Regnér**, recognized the valuable partnerships that Indigenous Organizations and Women established to achieve this strategic recommendation, noting that it is important that we all continue working on its implementation. “There is evidence that Indigenous Girls and Women are three times more likely to suffer violence than their non-indigenous counterparts. Indigenous Women defenders are even killed for protecting the rights of other women, and yet these attacks seldom make it to the headlines in the news,” she said. “The actions that we promote, she said, should help make visible the degree of violence that is really experienced.”

Sara Olsvig, International President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), recalled when the Danish government forced the implantation of contraceptive devices on women to reduce the birth rate in Greenland.

“Between 1966 and 1975, some 4,500 Inuit girls and women received an intrauterine device (IUD), often without their knowledge,” she explained. This forced family planning project violated the health of women who suffered pain, infections and difficulties getting pregnant for several years. “The recommendation that we have in our hands can help us make sure that such shameful violations of women’s bodies never happen again,” she added.

Concluding the event, **Puyr Tembé**, president of the Federação Estadual dos Povos Indígenas do Pará (FEPIPA), explained that despite this Brazilian Indigenous Women’s organization being relatively young, “we have managed to strengthen and multiply our voices by occupying institutional spaces that help us to create public policies that are better aligned with our needs and interests.” “We have made significant progress in the formal recognition of our rights, and General Recommendation 39 is a relevant tool that recognizes us as Indigenous Women agents of change, inside and outside our communities, allowing us to reach for the full exercise of our political rights,” she concluded.



A necessary dialogue. Roundtable at the UNPFII on the issues of Inuit Women

To strengthen the movement of the Inuit Women of the Arctic, another side event was organized on **April 20, 2023, at the 22nd session of the UNPFII**. The event was organized by FIMI, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and the Permanent Mission of Denmark in New York, with the aim of promoting the effective implementation of CEDAW's General Recommendation 39, demanding that the States protect the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Girls and Women. The dialogue touched on the specific issues affecting Inuit Women in the different Arctic regions of the world, and strategies based on collaboration between indigenous organizations and the UN to address these issues were presented.

For a full chronicle of the event, visit FIMI's website:

<https://cedaw.fimi-iiwf.org/en/2023/05/31/inuit-women-of-the-arctic-design-strategies-for-collaboration-between-indigenous-organizations-and-the-un-for-the-implementation-of-cedaws-general-recommendation-no-39/>



"Indigenous Women at the Indigenous Women's March: Defending Biodiversity through Ancestral Roots in Brasilia, Brazil"

On **September 11, 2023**, in Brasilia, over four thousand women gathered to show, through their dances and songs, the power of our collective struggle. All of the gathered to participate in the third edition of the **Indigenous Women's March—Ecosystem Women in Defense of Biodiversity through their Ancestral Roots**. "A new era is being born, in which we are not going to accept violence, we are going to fight it. We are going to say, enough of the violences against us, against our very existence; we want to be respected as warrior women, as power women, as women who build dreams," clamoured indigenous leader Puyr Temb .

COP28: Indigenous Women united to face climate change

Indigenous Women's Organizations exchange on the impact of climate change on our communities. Our resilience and capacity to manage resources represent a participatory solution towards environmental justice.



"Indigenous Women at COP28 in Dubai - Photo by '100 Ways to Catch the Wind'."

The impacts of climate change are ever more serious for Indigenous Peoples. Faced with the intensification of the environmental crisis, the organization Mama Cash, along with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Enlace Continental de Mujeres de las Américas (ECMIA), the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI), organized an analytical and interactive dialogue with key stakeholders and representatives of various sectors. **The event was held on December 4, 2023, in parallel to the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), with the objective of sharing ideas and developing resilient strategies to face the losses and damages that are affecting us because of climate change around the world.**

During the event, held in the city of Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, we shared our experiences on how we cope with the impacts of climate change in our communities. **This helped us review and systematize strategies, and to demonstrate that Indigenous**

Women's organizations have the capacity to manage more direct, equitable, effective and transparent funding to mitigate damages and losses, as a way to guarantee our access to environmental justice.

Naiyan Kiplagat, from the Narok People in Kenya and cofounder of the Paran Women's Group, highlighted the role of Indigenous Women in the conservation and protection of the environment and in assuring food security in that region of Africa. "When we talk about the resilience of Indigenous Women to the impacts of climate change, we also talk about applying our traditional knowledge, collective work, and the need to innovate and adapt our ancestral practices. Food is the key to facing these new challenges," she claimed. The leader, who works to organize and strengthen grassroots organizations, explained that Indigenous Women should lead the establishment of strategic agreements with key stakeholders and, through such alliances and common agendas, connect local problems with international solutions.

Jackie Qataliña Schaeffer, from the Iñupiaq People of Kotzebue and a representative of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) organization in Alaska, spoke about the losses and damages caused by the climate crisis that are impacting the Arctic region, and spoke of the collaboration mechanisms the Inuit People are using to face or mitigate them. She explained that, in the Arctic, increased rainfall is causing flooding and erosion. Furthermore, the increase in air temperature contributes to the melting of permafrost and the loss of sea ice, which causes the sea level to rise, resulting in further floods and coastal erosion. All these phenomena are the result of the socio-environmental catastrophe caused by climate change.

“ When we talk about the resilience of Indigenous Women to the impacts of climate change, we also talk about applying our traditional knowledge, collective work, and the need to innovate and adapt our ancestral practices [...]”, declared Naiyan Kiplagat, cofounder of the Paran Women's Group.



To fight these and other global impacts, **Antonella Cordone**, senior technical specialist of the Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), insisted that it is necessary to raise awareness about the urgent need for more direct financing for the protection of the territories, assets and livelihoods of indigenous communities.

Cordone explained that IFAD contributes to the **Ayni Fund**, one of FIMI's flagship programs, which mobilizes and exchanges human, financial and material resources to support Indigenous Women's organizations in strengthening their capacities, and in the implementation of economic, environmental and social development projects.

“ In order to make a difference in the fight against the climate crisis and to effect real changes in the communities, it is imperative that Indigenous Women have good access to technical, financial and human resources managed directly by them,” said Jeanette Sequeira.

In conclusion, the Programs Official for Europe and Central and North Asia at Mama Cash, **Jeanette Sequeira**, added that the climate crisis is also made worse by the absence of real financing to sustain businesses working directly in indigenous territories and that, with very few resources, can achieve enormous transformations. Sequeira works on a global advocacy program for a fair climate action, focused both on women's rights and on environmental justice movements and communities.

“In order to make a difference in the fight against the climate crisis and to effect real changes in the communities, it is imperative that Indigenous Women

have good access to technical, financial and human resources managed directly by them.

Making this a reality requires the support of multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies that have developed effective financing instruments with Indigenous Peoples,” said the Mama Cash Program Officer.

Sequeira made an urgent call to the international community, including key stakeholders and human rights activists and defenders around the world, to build a common political agenda, strengthen capacities and develop leadership among Indigenous Women, seeing how we “have the capacity to manage resources to face the impacts of climate change in our communities.”



Treating the Earth Like a Mother: Paran Women recognized at COP28

The Indigenous Women of the Ololunga community in Kenya—members of the Paran Women collective—were awarded a recognition at COP28 for their contribution in the fight against climate change. For decades, the members of the Paran Women collective have been building nurseries and carrying out reforestation activities to regenerate the forest in which they live.

Naiyan Kiplagat, one of the founding women of the group, travelled to Dubai to receive the recognition. This is the highest recognition awarded at the Conference for non-technical solutions. According to Naiyan, climate justice means understanding the environment around us and treating the earth as a mother. As she received the award, the leader mentioned all the Kenyan women who are committed to the project.

To know more about the way these women deal with environmental violence, visit FIMI's website:

<https://fimi-iwvf.org/en/noticia/paran-women-group-creates-a-tree-nursery-empowering-indigenous-women-and-planting-hope/>







Leadership tools

"I am very excited, everything we shared and learned was wonderful to keep us going with our struggles."

Pema Wangmo, Mugum People

"The international community wakes up when we come together and share knowledge."

*Siobhon Rumurang McManus
Pueblo Chamorro*

Ten years of the Global Leadership School. Building bridges and sharing knowledge for advocacy

In the tenth edition of the Global Leadership School, women leaders and community activists came together to share the strength and wisdom of their peoples. The space allowed them to build their capacities and develop advocacy projects in favour of Indigenous Women, inside and outside of their communities.

In Kenya, Indigenous Samburu Women do not own the land: current land management systems benefit men. The Constitution of the Republic of Kenya considers land as property, and does not approach it as a life-altering socio-economic resource that is ultimately key to survival. Maria Lelitoya knows this, but she wants women in Africa to learn more about their territorial rights, to mitigate the impact of extractive industries, to achieve their economic independence and to secure their livelihoods.

It is to support women who, like Maria Lelitoya, seek to improve the living conditions of their communities, **that we founded FIMI's Global Leadership School. Since 2013, we have brought together women leaders and activists from Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Arctic and the Pacific on this global platform that helps us share the strength and wisdom of the Indigenous Peoples, and to make a difference across different economic and socio-political areas in favour of Indigenous Women.**

Through the capacity-building sessions, the creation of networks and spaces for participants to make an impact at a global level—guided by experts with extensive experience in the field of human rights and advocacy—,

or the sheer opportunity to share similar experiences with other women, the Global Leadership School has proven to be one of FIMI's most emblematic programs.

In 2023, we saw the participation of 13 women leaders: five representatives from Latin America, three from Africa, four from Asia and one from the Pacific region. The participants met virtually three times a week over the course of two and a half months.

On this occasion, the selected women received the support of a regional academic advisor from Columbia University and had the opportunity to participate—through a political declaration that they drafted together—at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

The sessions, conducted in both English and Spanish, were designed to facilitate fair conditions for the training of Indigenous Women from very diverse backgrounds, who came together to develop global agendas for their advocacy in international decision-making processes. "The international community wakes up when we come together and share knowledge," acknowledged Siobhon Rumurang McManus, a graduate of the School.



Maria Lelitoya wants the women in Africa to learn more about their territorial rights.

Strengthening leadership, nurturing skills

In some communities in Mexico, in the state of Oaxaca, women cannot exercise their right to vote. To fight the inequalities, Elizabeth Olvera will translate CEDAW's General Recommendation 39 (GR39) in the Zapotec, Mixtec and Ayuük languages. Indigenous Women will thus have tools to enforce their political rights within the community system and electoral parties.

Elizabeth will also build a Citizen Watch, which will allow her to monitor the fulfillment of women's political participation rights in this region of the world marked by inequalities.

To achieve Elizabeth's dream and those of the rest of the participants, **the Global Leadership School included five virtual modules; online attendance to the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program of the Institute for the Study of Human Rights of Columbia University; and a new session called "Strategies for Empowering Indigenous Women for Political Advocacy: the Perspective of Indigenous Women with Disabilities."** This will allow us, in a not-so-distant future, to have the representation of people with different abilities and of their organizations.



Elizabeth Olvera will translate CEDAW's GR39 in the Zapotec, Mixtec and Ayuük languages.



Regina Yuditisari seeks to strengthen the role of women in the protection of the ancestral territories of the Dayak Indigenous Peoples as well as the indigenous territories of Benuaq Tanjung (in the villages of Tangerang, Teluk Runja and Sidhari), Kampong Silat Hulu and Batu Menang, Ketapang Regency, West Kalimantan, in Indonesia. Regina wants the women of these communities to have the freedom to manage their indigenous territories, according to their knowledge and traditions. In 2023, the Global Leadership School supported her in this process.

Elsa Stamatopoulou director of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program at Columbia University, declared at the conclusion of this tenth edition that "the most important objective of the Global School is to build bridges and share knowledge." Indeed, in its years of existence and through its various programs, FIMI worked as a bridge that connects Indigenous Women with various sources of knowledge and of human and financial resources. It thus facilitates connection at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Ten years and a significant path

FIMI's dedication to capacity building and to strengthening organizations led by Indigenous Women, through the lessons learned at the Global Leadership School, has generated significant achievements over the course of 10 years.

The community projects we mention here are just a few of the advocacy plans formulated in the tenth edition of FIMI's Global Leadership School. They are also proof that, "by investing in the training of Indigenous Women leaders, the positive results and long-term changes can reach more women, children and entire communities," declared Cecilia Ramirez, the School's coordinator.

With the closing of this edition, there are now 251 Indigenous Women who, like Maria, Elizabeth and Regina, have embarked on a challenging but rewarding journey for the defence of the individual and collective rights of their Peoples.



Regina Yuditisari seeks to strengthen the role of women in the protection of ancestral territories.

Global Leadership School 2023. A space for collective growth





LATIN AMERICA

Jonery Becker Carranza
Nicaragua
Miskito

Medalith Rivera Maquera
Peru
Aymara

Bridanny Marianne
Peru
Aymara

Elizabeth Olvera
Mexico
Zapoteco

Yeshing Juliana Upun
Yoses
Guatemala
Maya Kaqchikel



ASIA

Regina Yuditasari
Indonesia
Dayak
/Kendawangan

Pema Wangmo Lama
Nepal
Mugum

Richa Pradhan
Nepal
Newa

Anima Debbarma
India
Borok



AFRICA

Maria Lelitoya
Kenya
Samburu

Herma Rötung
Kenya
Pokot

Irene Nainyeyie
Kenya
Masai



PACIFIC

Siobhon Rumurang McManus
Guam
Chamorro



“

Thank you FIMI for this great opportunity to be part of the School. It was an enriching experience for me; somewhat challenging at times, what with work, taking care of the house, homework, other social duties and the complexity of these times; but I made it. ”

Richa Pradhan, Newa People

From our library: *Seeds of strength*

In March 2023, FIMI published the magazine *Seeds of strength: Indigenous Women's Stories of Empowerment and Struggle*. In this publication, we present six chronicles, corresponding to different sociocultural regions included in FIMI's global mechanism. These are stories of Indigenous Women leaders, organizations and/or communities that address complex situations through transformative actions.

In this yearbook, we would like to share the story of Aminatu Gambo, who was part of the first edition of the Global Leadership School, and who integrated FIMI's team as our Political Participation Coordinator.



Leading into the Future: Aminatu Gambo and the Empowerment of Indigenous Women

Rebel, as she was called in the Mbororo community of Cameroon. Her defiance of gender conventions by studying at the university instead of marrying was viewed with suspicion. This reflects the gender inequalities entrenched in some Indigenous Communities, accentuated by the colonial past that imposed western stereotypes, limiting women's mobility and freedoms. **Aminatu Gambo knew that she needed more than just studying to bring about a change in the destiny of girls like her. Her determination led her to become a lawyer, challenging conventions and fighting for gender equality.**

Aminatu is a human rights defender who works in her country as well as internationally to strengthen Indigenous Women's political advocacy and participation. Born in 1986, she grew up in the indigenous Mbororo region, located in the border areas of Cameroon. It was there that she became sensitized to gender inequalities and began to feel a vocation to defend the rights of Indigenous Women. During her adolescence, she noticed that the education of girls was relegated to a

secondary role compared to the education of boys due to the gender roles historically reproduced in her society, as in many parts of the world. Despite this, she decided to study law at the University of Yaoundé II to help defend the futures of women and youth.

"In the name of tradition, many people in my community believe that girls, once they are 13 or 14 years old, should get married, have children and be housewives, and education is more reserved for men," explains Aminatu. "I was lucky because, as a child, I received a scholarship to study outside my community. The school required parents to sign a document promising not to take us out of school to get married."



During her first year at university, Aminatu began volunteering with an organization as an advocate for girls' and women's rights. It was through this opportunity that she met Lucy Mullenkei, FIMI's vice president and coordinator of the African Indigenous Women's Organization (AIWO), who guided her on her path to leadership. "Her mentor," as she calls her, pushed her to become a network partner at the regional level and soon after, **in 2013, Aminatu participated in FIMI's Global Indigenous Women's Leadership School.** This global mechanism has allowed her to meet Indigenous Women from different regions of the world, and to strengthen her career as a promoter of Indigenous Women's political participation.

The empowerment of women that Aminatu has promoted through FIMI is inspiring. For this human rights advocate, true power comes from Indigenous Women first understanding the mechanisms, policies, and laws, both national and international, that are available to them and that they need to understand to stand their ground. "You can only stand up for your rights when you know what they are," she recently noted in an interview for the International Human Rights Film Festival in Colombia.

In a world that is still reluctant to fully recognize Indigenous Peoples and where inequities in access to information and political training prevail, Aminatu's leadership has the responsibility to foster more leadership: Indigenous Women trained and empowered to influence the most important decision-making spaces on the planet.

As FIMI's former Political Participation and Advocacy coordinator, and in line with the organization's mandate, she ensured that more women from diverse communities were able to make use of their own voice in global arenas. Some of these spaces include those where human rights are discussed, such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), among others..



“ You can only stand up for your rights when you know what they are,” claims Aminatu.



Furthermore, Aminatu has shared tools to attend events such as the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (COP), where they seek to influence global policies and, above all, that the important role of Indigenous Women in the fight against the climate emergency is recognized.

"If women are not in leadership positions, there will never be change," says Aminatu. According to her, one of the biggest obstacles to the participation of Indigenous Women leaders in international events is the difficulty in obtaining visas and being able to travel. FIMI supports them through the creation of opportunities for dialogue and advocacy.

"We Indigenous Women are discriminated against not only outside our communities for being Indigenous, but within them as well, because men do not consider us when it comes to making decisions," explains Aminatu. "This is because, historically, Indigenous Women have been seen as responsible for the

The promoter of Indigenous Women's rights focuses on sharing knowledge, enabling bilateral negotiation spaces, and strengthening women's capacities to represent themselves through seminars, workshops, and campaigns. Her leadership is based on knowledge transfer and accompaniment: "We make sure that the women do the talking. We don't speak for them. If an idea comes from them, it has much more impact on the States," she explains.

"An important part of the international struggle of these Indigenous Women leaders and of FIMI is to make the world and the political agenda understand that Indigenous Women, though they fall under the general category of 'women,' face specific challenges," notes Aminatu. According to her, many countries still do not recognize the existence or rights of Indigenous Peoples in their constitutions, leading governments not to consider our differences when implementing laws and initiatives at the national level. The lack of programs

home and raising children, while men have been in charge of tasks related to the productive sphere." Aminatu stresses the importance of giving Indigenous Women a leadership position in making decisions that affect their lives.

“If women are not in leadership positions, there will never be change,” says Aminatu.

developed in our local communities, the absence of interpreters in hospitals who speak our Indigenous languages, and public schools with regulations that do not take our culture into account are just some of the situations that persist in many countries.

“We make sure that the women do the talking. We don't speak for them. If an idea comes from them, it has much more impact on the States.”



Aminatu also coordinated the Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women, published by FIMI in 2020. The report aimed to provide an overview of the situation of Indigenous Women 25 years after the Beijing Conference, and to review the measures implemented to verify whether governments had considered us, Indigenous Women, in their actions. "During the last 25 years, and based on this report, Indigenous Women are still not considered different from the hegemonic women's society. We are working to establish that distinction," she added.

Nevertheless, Aminatu is confident in the results and impact of activism and advocacy. She reminds us that this kind of work is not quick and requires years of dedication and patience. But she assures us that no matter how long it takes, change will always be seen in the future. "FIMI is growing, and its leadership is excellent. We learn to improve every day. As one of the largest global networks of Indigenous Women, FIMI leads by example."

Despite the multiple barriers we face as Indigenous Women and Girls, from cultural and religious barriers to political and economic hurdles, **for Aminatu the key remains that which moved us in our youth and, she assures us, changed our lives: education.** "If a woman has access to education, she will have the ability to identify when she is experiencing violence and know how to avoid it. She will know how to gain economic power. If we can provide more access to education, that would be the most important thing."







Networks for Well-Being

"They started bringing in seeds; maybe I could have built a greenhouse with my small salary, but the teachings that came with it all were incredible."

Lucía Elba Álvarez Paicura, Mapuche Cayún People

"We believe that knowledge can be given added value, but only when it is shared with others. I am ready to learn, but also to teach."

Fernando Aguilar Marcelino, Nahuat Pipil People

Voices of our members: a window into Well-Being

Through the Ayni Fund, FIMI co-invests resources. We support projects that, from different perspectives, promote Well-Being. To communicate the impacts of those projects, we launched in 2023 the “Voices of our members” section within FIMI’s website.



Working Meeting of Indigenous Women from Asia in Bangkok, Thailand.

FIMI’s Ayni Fund mobilizes and exchanges human, financial and material resources to support projects that seek to improve the living conditions of Indigenous Women and their communities. Over the years, through Ayni, we have worked jointly with each of the indigenous organizations involved in these projects. **While it is true that we come from different places, we share similar values and issues. Our mutual contributions attest to the strong and fertile relationship we have established between the global arena and local communities.**

Created and directed specifically by and for Indigenous Women, Ayni aims to execute grants that respond to the priorities of organizations and women committed to the defence of their individual and collective rights. Through the whole grant cycle, we design and document these processes and communicate the results, including bilateral partnerships with other funds. We can thus support the implementation of each project in order to build capacities and measure the proposal’s impact inside as well as outside the indigenous communities.

In 2023 we decided to launch “Voices of our Partners,” a section of FIMI’s website that provides an account of this documentation task and highlights the diversity and relevance of the projects supported by Ayni. These proposals address different issues, such as food sovereignty, the rational use of natural goods, violences against women, or the revitalization of the mother tongue, among others. We present two of these projects below.

The Power of the Law in the Hands of Indigenous Women and Girls

Indigenous Maasai Women in Kenya live in a patriarchal society in which men are the sole guardians of the law. To address this historical marginalization, the **Patinaai Osim** organization set out to place the power of the law in the hands of women by building a community-based legal framework.

With the aim of promoting the political and juridical empowerment of Indigenous Women and Girls, Patinaai Osim, thanks to the Ayni Fund, trained a network of 18 women, who in turn trained 100 more women each to provide legal assistance to anyone who needs it.

Activities included community education through radio broadcasts on laws and inequalities, and the creation of a forum for judges and magistrates that led to concrete commitments to ensure that justice may begin to benefit women.

Mother Earth to the Stew Pot

The **Faith Foundation** organization, in the state of Meghalaya, in India, worked with women farmers in two villages in the Ri Bhoi district to revitalize the traditional practices and indigenous food systems to make them more sustainable. To achieve this, the project offered workshops on vermicomposting, biopesticides, the local mapping of seeds, and other forms of organic, traditionally healthy agriculture.

In addition, Faith Foundation promoted an exchange of knowledge about native seeds and edible wild plants, through nature walks and documentation workshops with teenagers and farmer women.

"These workshops made us realize the importance, richness and strength of the resources present in our communities," said one of the participants. "When the world shut down due to Covid, we understood that we needed to rely on the resources of our community, which was all we had," she added.

Our Voices

These stories are part of the 26 projects included in "Voices of our Partners," a space inspired by the philosophy of Well-Being. They are proposals that show how Indigenous Women have progressed in the exercise of our individual and collective rights: we claim our spirituality, preserve our languages, and defend the land and territories of our ancestors.

To learn more...

If you want to take a look at the projects supported by the Ayni Fund, visit the "Voices of our Partners" section on FIMI's website. You will find a complete report of each one including photographs:

<https://fimi-iiwf.org/en/news/voices-of-our-partners/>



Indigenous Women from the Faith Foundation organization in Ri Bhoi, Meghalaya, India.

The leader sisters and their organizations have faced different types of violence with wisdom and strength. They are all examples of courage and resistance, because they understand their own harsh socio-political reality and have decided to change it. **Getting to know them and their stories has allowed us to keep building their capacities, to strengthen the network of collaboration with local networks, and to gather a greater number of partners to support us in promoting the agenda of equality and inclusion for the women of the world.**







Spotlight on Cultural Diversity

"As indigenous researchers, we should observe, listen to, rehearse, analyze and structure ourselves following reality itself in order to reconstruct our knowledge systems and defend our intellectual property as Indigenous Peoples."

Tarcila Rivera Zea, Quechua people, FIMI's President

"Research is a collective instrument for women, different generations and the Peoples, because it helps us unlearn the denial, shame and fear associated with feeling indigenous, helping us heal those historical oppressions that we have internalized."

Lorena López, Maya K'iche people, researcher and advisor for FIMI's Diploma in Intercultural Research

Guardians of Ancestral Knowledge: gathering for an intercultural, decolonial research with political advocacy

Academics, researchers, indigenous experts and students reflect on the importance of a decolonial and transformative research both in its content and in its methodologies. We encourage a collaborative and ongoing dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge systems.

Faced with the shortage of doctors and allopathic medicine that came with the health crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a group of Adivasi women healers, in the central region of India, worked to restore traditional practices to recover the health of their communities. "All women healers work independently from their own homes, explains Mamta Kujur, from the community of Oorna; however, this ancestral knowledge should be protected by the State. The government should create a strong structure for the conservation and protection of this knowledge by developing policies, programs and budgets to this effect; then we can sustain the native tradition that returns health to our people." In this population of India, Adivasi women agree that they need a government that knows and values community medical practices and knowledge.

"We have forests full of herbs that we use to restore our health, and methods to reduce the prevalence of infectious diseases; all this is present in our ecosystems, but it is not used correctly.

If we train traditional women healers, this knowledge can be passed on to future generations," says social worker Malti Tirkey. In India, Indigenous Women recover ancestral methods and cures, while communicating in indigenous languages the importance of caring for the forests and supporting traditional native medical practices and knowledge.



With the aim of generating evidence, data and decolonial knowledge to improve the full exercise of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Program of the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) organized the Gathering of Indigenous Women Researchers Guardians of Ancestral Knowledge, from March 27 to 29, 2023, in Panama City. There, we first set out to generate our own research processes based on commitments, responsibilities and collective actions for the deconstruction of hegemonic epistemology. We then reflected on the political articulation and advocacy necessary for the defence of the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Women, Girls and Youth, and of Mother Earth.



“ If we train traditional women healers, this knowledge can be passed on to future generations,” says social worker Malti Tirkey.



As part of the gathering, a dialogue was held on **The importance of an intercultural and decolonial research—Indigenous Women's contributions to culturally relevant knowledge.** At the event, indigenous and non-indigenous women researchers reflected on the importance of a decolonial and transformative research that can open and sustain a collaborative dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge systems.

During the opening, **Teresa Zapeta**, Maya K'iche from Guatemala and FIMI's Executive Director, explained that FIMI has been implementing its Research and Knowledge Exchange Program since 2007, through which we have initiated a process of epistemological reconstruction to confront the oppression and domination of the Western education system. "We need our own methodology to conduct research and to break with the idea that we should be studied, that we are the objects rather than the subjects of research. We want to show the world that we, too want to be research subjects and to develop our own research," she added.

In the light of this recognition, the following leaders made their contributions: **Tarcila Rivera Zea**, Quechua from Peru, FIMI's president; **Binalakshmi Nepram**, from the Northeast region of India, founder of Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network and the Global Alliance

Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace; **Lorena López**, Maya K'iche from Guatemala, researcher and advisor for FIMI's Diploma in Intercultural Research; **Lucy Mulenkei**, Maasai of Kenya, FIMI's vice- president; and **Myrna Cunningham**, Miskito from Nicaragua, doctor and activist. **The sisters elaborated on the relevance of building bridges between different academic stakeholders through the exchange of knowledge, experiences, methodologies and best practices regarding research conducted with an intercultural, community approach and through the Indigenous Women's own voice.**

In her address, **Tarcila Rivera Zea** stressed the importance of recovering oral tradition as a source of knowledge and transmission of ancestral knowledge, without restricting it to the forms of oppression and domination of the current education systems. "Today, indigenous researchers face an enormous challenge, because oral knowledge should not be evaluated or taught through Western educational methods," she said.



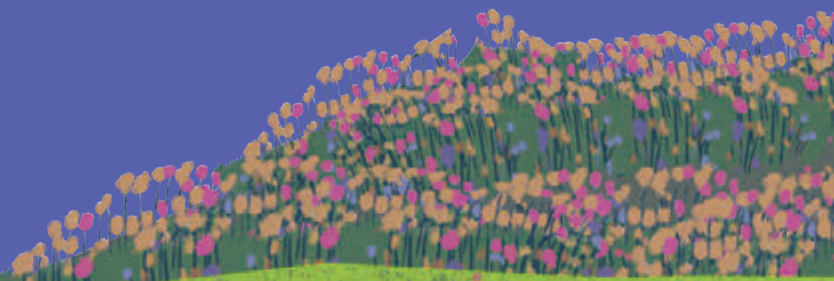
Binalakshmi Nepram explained that cultural appropriation is another form of territorial extractivism, which reduces the collective knowledge of the Peoples to a simple commodity that can be exchanged or sold in foreign universities. "We need to protect the traditional practices of knowledge generation and transmission, for which we should create global indigenous universities and train their educators," she proposed.

To the question of why intercultural research is important for advocacy work and for Indigenous Women's organizations, **Lorena López**, specialist in ethnicity, gender and indigenous law, responded: "Intercultural studies nourish and awaken the feeling-thinking, the cosmo-feeling and the collective cosmo-knowing that form the roots of life systems." According to the researcher, this allows "to inform the advocacy work at the global, regional and local levels and to generate data on the situations that impact the lives of Indigenous Women, in order to contribute to the political transformation of their personal and community lives."

On the challenges faced by Indigenous Women researchers, **Lucy Mulenkei** insisted on the importance of protecting our knowledge from people who only extract information from the communities and never return. She explained: "We should learn to systematize the transmission of our knowledge to correctly choose whether to place it in the public or private domain, because there is sacred information that we should not share so that it is not altered or distorted."

At the gathering, the indigenous experts—with their vast experience in intercultural research—agreed on positioning and protecting this knowledge as the cultural property of the communities. At the same time, they highlighted its political, transformative and decolonial potential for the defence of the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Women and Peoples.

"We carry documentary research to decolonize ourselves and to change the structures that want us oppressed. We can change the conditions that control us if we integrate ourselves into the educational system and confront the power structures by building academic alliances with institutions, governments, authorities and Indigenous Women," said **Myrna Cunningham**. And she concluded: "The important thing is that whatever we do together may contribute to the political action of all."



“ We need to protect the traditional practices of knowledge generation and transmission, for which we should create global indigenous universities and train their educators,” claimed Binalakshmi Nepram..





To learn more...

As part of our efforts to strengthen research on issues of importance for Indigenous Women, in 2023 we launched the fourth edition of FIMI's Diploma in Intercultural Research. Women leaders from different regions of the world participated in the program, sharing the documentation work they are doing in their communities.

To know more about the objectives and strategies of FIMI's Research and Knowledge Exchange Program, visit our website:

<https://fimi-iiwf.org/en/our-programs/research-and-knowledge-exchange-program/>

