

# INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

A collective and shared reflection



**ECMIA**  
ENLACE CONTINENTAL DE MUJERES  
INDÍGENAS DE LAS AMÉRICAS



**CHIRAPAQ**  
Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú

Series: *Training Notebooks / 31*

*INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE. A collective and shared reflection*

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E-mail: [secretaria@ecmia.org](mailto:secretaria@ecmia.org)

Webpage: [www.ecmia.org](http://www.ecmia.org)

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Av. Horacio Urteaga 534, oficina 203, Jesús María, Lima, Peru

Phone: (0051)(1) 423-2757

E-mail: [ayllu@chirapaq.org.pe](mailto:ayllu@chirapaq.org.pe)

Webpage: [www.chirapaq.org.pe](http://www.chirapaq.org.pe)

Prepared by: CHIRAPAQ's Indigenous Women's Program and  
ECMIA's Economic Justice Driving Group

Design, layout and illustration: Juan José Carlos Vásquez Vásquez

Editing: CHIRAPAQ Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú  
Av. Horacio Urteaga 534, oficina 203, Jesús María, Lima, Peru

First edition

Lima, February 2024

Print run: 500 copies

Published on February 2024

Legal Deposit No. 2024-01660 in the National Library of Peru

It finished printing in February 2024:

Sinco Diseño E.I.R.L.

Jr. Huaraz 449, Breña, Lima.

Teléf. 998037046 • [sincoeditores@gmail.com](mailto:sincoeditores@gmail.com)

This edition was made possible with the support of  
THE WELLSPRING PHILANTHROPIC FUND

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# INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

A collective and shared reflection

In the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA), we reflect on **what economic rights mean and how we can achieve economic justice**. This booklet contains our reflections and seeks to become a tool for advocacy.



## ■ Why do we reflect on economic justice?

In the international arena, the concept of economic justice is key to formulate public policies and to decide on the direction of economy in general. Therefore, as indigenous women and young women, we must have our own stand on economic justice according to our own worldview, ways of life and aspirations to exercise economic rights.

## What is Economy for Indigenous Women and Young Women of the Americas?



**Economy comes from the administration of the home and territory as spaces for the continuity and sustainability of life.**

- ✓ **It involves principles and values to live in harmony and balance** with Mother Earth to ensure sustainability, care and stewardship.



**It has always been present in our lives and peoples.**

- ✓ **It is the satisfaction of our needs** through trade, exchange and production.



**It has to do with productive and reproductive work.**  
We care for Mother Earth, as well as for our homes and families.

- ✓ **Economy applied in a sustainable** manner with ethical principles of reciprocity, solidarity, mutual collaboration, complementarity, respect for nature, fair payment, identity belonging and non-predatory or individualist accumulation.

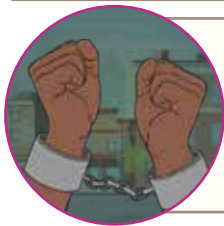
**Autonomy and self-determination**  
**Collective and individual rights**

**The Good Living – a Dignified Life** represents the achievement of well-being and development, which includes money, but also other dimensions such as spiritual, social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

## From Injustice to Economic Justice

**We suffer various forms of violence in the economic field.** At ECMIA we decided to name these forms of violence to address them and propose solutions based on our work and indigenous knowledge.

**Loss of indigenous economic systems:** As indigenous people, we had different economic systems based on principles that ensured the satisfaction of our individual and collective needs, and care for Mother Earth. Nowadays, we see that an economic model that generates exclusion, impoverishment and deterioration of Mother Earth has been imposed.



**The labor discrimination and racism** in societies impacted by the colonial system hinder our access to jobs and decent salaries, as well as the recognition of the vital work for humanity that we do by caring for and managing our territories.

**The feminization and racialization** of the most precarious and lowest-paying jobs such as care work, household chores and agricultural work.



**Migration** or forced displacements due to conflicts and the militarization of our territories, as well as the dispossession of our territories, which forces us to take precarious jobs in which we often face discrimination and exploitation.

**Human trafficking** due to licit and illicit extractive activities that year after year have a significant presence in our territories and where indigenous women and young women are the most vulnerable.



**Early unions and child and adolescent pregnancies** that increase school dropout among indigenous girls and adolescents and hinder our access to other opportunities for personal and economic development.

**The lack of access to basic services** (such as healthcare and education) forces us to seek resources outside of our own sustainable economy, which undermines our right to a true economic autonomy.



These injustices reflect the violence we face in the economic sphere in an economic model that favors individualism, excessive accumulation at the expense of sustainability, life and dignity, especially for indigenous women, children and young women. Therefore, participation in decision-making on these issues is essential for us, and **we are building proposals to achieve economic justice.**



## Economic Justice for a Good Living: Conceptualization from ECMIA

The economic justice we aspire to is closely related to a **Good Living**: a way of living in harmony with our environment, with our sisters and brothers, and with Mother Earth.



The elements necessary to live economic justice are:



**Work that meets our individual, collective and community needs;** with relationships of reciprocity and mutual support, where we exercise our cultural and spiritual values, with the capacity to administer natural, cultural, ancestral and spiritual goods and intellectual property rights, and make our contributions to the development of the economy visible.

**Recognition of our work and contributions as indigenous women,** both economically and in all aspects of life; **fair payment** for our work; and **reparation** for the injustices that continue to affect our development.





**Value and recognition of the contribution made by indigenous women** to economy, family and society.

**Fair, dignified and sustainable payment for work, so that our economic activities can be regenerative** and enable the continuity of life and economic autonomy.



**Respect and appreciation** for all forms of spirituality, knowledge, intellectual property and sociocultural practices to sustain and reproduce life.

**Care for and protection of the balance of Mother Earth and all the material and immaterial goods in it. Revaluation and strengthening of our own economy that promotes respect for Mother Earth's cycles** and allows its recovery.



**Responsible consumption and solidary and fair exchanges.**

**Better distribution of wealth, services and goods** for a dignified life, involving **the defense of biodiversity and human rights.** This also includes access to land ownership.



**Exercise of autonomy and self-determination by indigenous women and peoples** to define and establish ways and means **of political and territorial governance.** Economic justice refers to the right of peoples to generate their own economic systems and to achieve and/or exercise economic autonomy based on our identities and cultures.

**Economic autonomy to eradicate violence.** This has a positive impact that goes beyond the satisfaction of needs and has an impact on the achievement of well-being and on the ability of us, indigenous women and young women, to decide on our life project. It also generates conditions to get out of situations where we face violence.







**Full involvement in decision-making at all levels** (locally, nationwide and worldwide) to define economic and fiscal policies, and in all sectors of the economy. In that sense, economical justice alludes to equal representation in making decisions regarding the functioning of the economy (production, reproduction, commerce and consumption) and the administration of natural goods, for women and men and not for one power group only.

**Food sovereignty and security** are key elements to achieve economic justice. We have the right to reproduce food systems (agriculture, gathering, fishing, grazing) and exchange the surplus and knowledge based on our needs, cultures and identities, to sustain our homes and peoples.



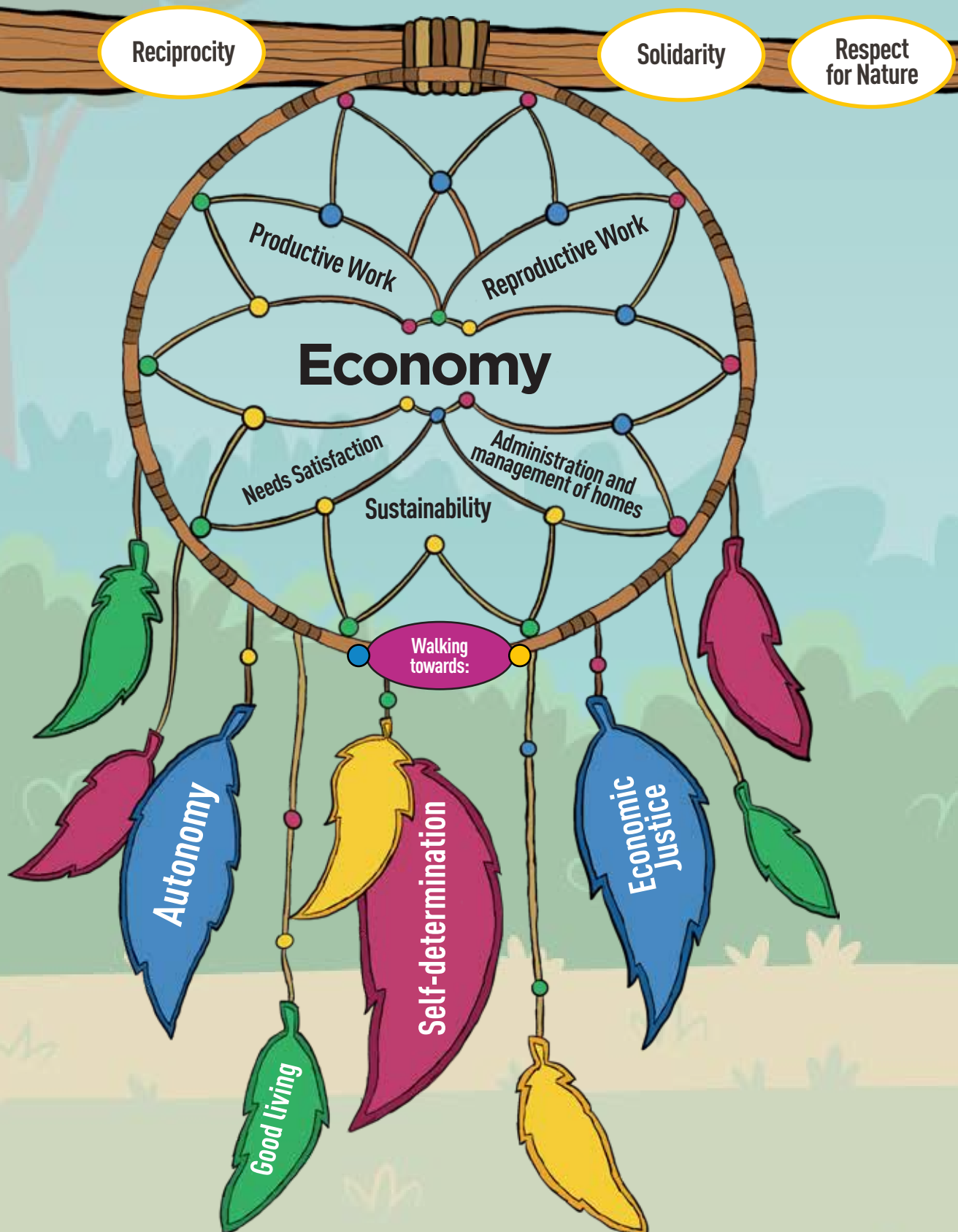
**Maintain our identity and culture.** Traditional knowledge is our contribution to society to satisfy needs and for the sustainability of life.

Reflect more on how our economic justice proposals can also be aimed at improving "life quality" in terms of **self-care and collective care, from the body**, in our ways of working and relating to economic issues, while keeping our **bodies as indigenous women and the body of Mother Nature in mind**; all of this in a context of issues related to pollution and climate change, and the diseases in our bodies.



**The States have the obligation to ensure our economic rights and allow our participation in decision-making at all levels.**

Core elements of economy and economic justice  
for indigenous women and young women







## Questions to reflect on

1.

What are the economic rights we know for us and our peoples?

4.

How do we participate in any sphere of decision-making on the administration of our homes and territories?

2.

What spiritual, emotional and material needs do we have as indigenous women and young women? How do we live the satisfaction of our needs?

5.

What is economic justice from the standpoint of our peoples' principles and values?

3.

What do we do to satisfy our needs? How do we live work?

6.

What challenges do we face to achieve economic justice?





## Glossary

### **Self-care:**

Actions for the sake of our mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health and that of our families, communities, territories and Mother Earth, to achieve our emotional and economic autonomy.

### **Dignified life:**

To have rights and opportunities to expand our capacities with freedom and autonomy, have access to services and goods to satisfy our material, emotional and spiritual needs in harmony with our environment and from our indigenous culture.

### **Dignified and proper work:**

Activities we carry out using our own capacities and vocations under favorable conditions for our well-being and health as indigenous women and young women, that is, activities that are acknowledged and/or have fair payment.

### **Economic Security:**

Ability to sustainably satisfy our needs and deploy our potential and autonomy from our own culture.

### **Governance:**

The highest authority is the community assembly where decisions are made collectively, across generations and with gender equality.

### **Responsible Consumption:**

Use goods and hire services, when necessary, with respect and harmony with the environment. It involves regulating markets according to the principles of solidarity and economic justice.

### **Goods for the economy:**

Soil, water and forests are examples of fundamental goods for indigenous peoples. The water from rivers, creeks, water sources and seas and rain water represent a source of life. We use water to irrigate crops to obtain abundant harvests, to supply families and the animals they raise. They are also used as a means of communication and transportation. Before referring to them as resources to be exploited, we call them goods we use to satisfy needs, but that we care for and respect to ensure the sustainability of life.

### **Food Systems:**

They represent a group of activities related to nutrition that include production, processing, transport and consumption, according to our knowledge and productive traditions that are cultural expressions and therefore strengthen the

identity and spirituality. Food systems generate food sovereignty, because they involve all aspects of human existence and its relation to and dependence on nature, the community and culture. An adequate diet is key to ensuring the good health, well-being and development of individuals.

### **Regenerative Economic Activities:**

Activities that allow nature to regenerate through the environment's contribution, care and sustainability.

### **Abundance:**

The concept of "abundance" is more related to the seed, crop, harvest, animals and wool, than to monetary abundance. Abundance is not the equivalent of accumulation, but rather a means for circulation. For example, the abundance of crops allows for abundance in our rituals, barter or use of social currencies, and access to technologies.

### **Female and male workers:**

Not only does it include the workforce of individuals, but also their abilities, skills, work techniques, training, and individual and collective knowledge to transform the goods in the environment into products and services to satisfy needs and contribute to the economy in its widest sense.

### **Care:**

By care we mean taking care of life: of human life and Mother Earth, and all living beings in it. Care is related to cultural identity, the territories, spirituality and the belief system of each people.

### **Equal opportunities:**

It is related to the actual possibilities for women in the workplace, decision-making and their participation in the market. It is perceived from a perspective of autonomy or economic independence, and the economic empowerment of women.

### **Economic empowerment:**

It is understood as the access and control of the means required to be able to live under sustainable conditions in the short, medium and long term, and to receive the benefits of such access and control (CHIRAPAQ, 2014:11). Empowerment aimed at economic freedom or independence is a direct part of our notion of economic justice.



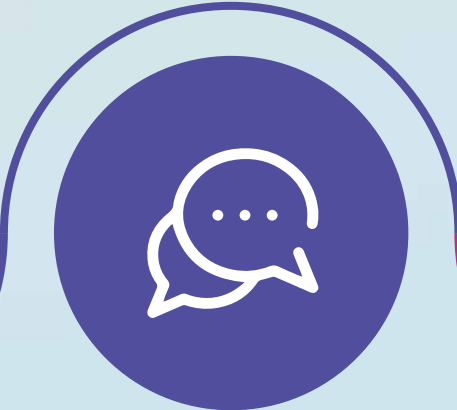
## Timeline of ECMIA to find paths towards economic justice

From the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA), we present the first reflections on what economic justice represents for indigenous women and young women, emphasizing the close relationship with Good Living.

This is the beginning of a dialogue that we must forge to guarantee the full exercise of our economic rights. With this booklet, we invite indigenous women and young women, as well as their organizations, to join in the collective construction of pathways that lead us towards economic justice.

**Meeting of Indigenous Women of the Americas generating proposals for Economic Justice, held in Antigua, Guatemala.**

**March 2022**



**2021-2022**

**Training process to introduce economic justice for indigenous women of the Americas.**

**September 2022**

**Cross-generational Dialogue "Economy and Society of Care".**



**Training process to strengthen the notion of economic justice.**

**2022-2023**



**Publication of the study entitled "Economic Justice: An approach from Indigenous Women and Young Women of the Americas."**

**August 2023**



**June 2023**

**Creation of an ECMIA Economic Justice Driving Group and Meeting of Indigenous Women of the Americas generating proposals for Economic Justice, held in Lima, Peru.**

Since 2021, us, indigenous elderly, adult and young women, in coordination with the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA), have reflected on the economy and economic justice, and have generated a vision that reflects our own cultures, realities and priorities. This path has led us to a joint and diverse reflection, in various languages and with the joint desire to build a collective instrument for training and advocacy. The booklet entitled "Indigenous Women and Economic Justice: a collective and shared reflection" (2024), prepared by ECMIA and CHIRAPAQ Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú, presents these reflections and invites indigenous women and young women from all parts of the world to continue this discussion within their organizations and communities and to join us to collectively build paths that will lead us to economic justice.

With the support of:

Wellspring  
Philanthropic Fund 



Continental Network of Indigenous Women  
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