



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: PERSPECTIVE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

**“GUARDIANS AND CUSTODIANS OF THE TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND
BIODIVERSITY OF THEIR PEOPLES”**



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Glossary

AMAN	Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara
APAVISAH	Association of Agroecological Producers of Vilcas Huamán Suarama and Huambalpa
AYNI	International Indigenous Women’s Forum
CADPI	Center for the Autonomy and Development of Indigenous Peoples
CDI	Indigenous Peoples and Development
CERDA	Centre for Research and Development in Uplands Areas
CHIRAPAQ	Center for Indigenous Cultures of Peru
CIDOB	Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia
CIMTA	Indigenous Council of Tacana Women
CIPTA	Indigenous Council of the Tacana People
CIR	Indigenous Council of Roraima
FPIC	Free, prior and informed consent
CMIB	Headquarters of Indigenous Women of Bolivia
CNAMIB	National Confederation of Indigenous Women of Bolivia
COICA	Coordinator of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin
POPs	Persistent organic pollutants
COPINH	Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras
CRACCN	North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regional Council of Nicaragua
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DESA	Desarrollos Energéticos S.A.
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAPI	Federation for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples
IWF	International Indigenous Women’s Forum
GRACCN	North Caribbean Coast Regional Government of Nicaragua



ILEPA	Indigenous Livelihoods Enhancement
NISD	National Institute of Social Development
INTA	Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform
LEI	Strategic Indigenous Litigation
MPIDO	Mainyuito Pastoralist Integrated Development Organization
NCCAM	National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
NEFIN	Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NOTIMIA	News Agency for Indigenous and Afro-descendant Women
OCD	Organization for community development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ILO	International Labor Organization
GMO	Genetically modified organisms
UN	United Nations
PINGOs	The Pastoralist Indigenous Non-Governmental Organization Forum
PNN	National Police of Nicaragua
PNUMA	United Nations Environment Programme
RACCN	Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region of Nicaragua
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SCJN	National Supreme Court of Justice
SILDAP	Silingan Dapit sa Sidlakang Mindanao
TCO	Native Community Lands
TEBTEBBA	Indigenous People International Centre for Policy Research and Education
TTR	Land, territories and natural resources

Acknowledgement



This study gathers the feelings, reflections and proposals of indigenous women fighting for environmental justice within their communities, where access to land, territories and natural resources is a priority for their lives, those of their peoples and their future generations.

Therefore, we dedicate this study in honour of the life of our grandmothers who have taught us in many ways the importance to sustainably taking care of our Mother Earth.

In the same way, we sincerely thank all our sisters who have generously collaborated to this study through their contributions, experiences and knowledge, accomplishing a broad analysis based on their perspectives, conceptualizing and identifying good practices to claim environmental justice.

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Finally, we thank the readers of this study who want to make a difference in this world, and for which we urgently need to find short, medium and long term solutions in order to take care of Mother Earth. We wish this study could be a tool to influence and generate evidence on issues regarding environmental justice and at the same time, to be the basis to promote programs or public policies for the access to the right to environmental justice, based on ancestral, integral and holistic knowledge of the indigenous women of the world.





1. Introduction

Over the last decades, the issue of Environmental Justice has become increasingly important, mainly due to the changes in climate and its impacts around the world. In international discussions, both academics and international organizations have been the participants in defining this issue. Climate programs, projects, and actions aimed at achieving Environmental Justice at different levels have been promoted in our countries and regions, always in accordance with a preestablished precept from the externality of our realities.

Environmental Justice is a topic that must be treated from the perspective of rights, which incorporate environmental aspects. Initially, the issue of Environmental Justice was talked about from the perspective of living in a healthy and safe environment, which is an inherent right regardless of the ethnic origin, where all people should have equal opportunities to be protected from environmental threats at home, school, work; and participate in the environmental planning processes in order to be able achieve that (Cohen, Edelson and Fischbach, S.A.). This first approach to Environmental Justice from the perspective of health, disrupts many spaces, people and indigenous peoples around the planet. The proliferation of extractive companies of primary resources in developing countries, as well as the increase of environmental impacts related to climate change, are having a great impact on local populations, including climatic migrants.

For Indigenous Peoples, and specifically for indigenous women, the struggle for land, territory and natural resources has been a central focus of their demands. The Beijing Conference in 1995 was one of the first instances in which Indigenous Women from different regions of the world had the space to meet at an international level and coordinate their demands together. At the end of the conference, the Indigenous Women prepared their own statement, affirming their identity and their struggle as Indigenous Women¹. Among their main proposals, the topic of “Environmental Justice” was enunciated with the following statements:

- a. The Earth is our mother, from whom we were given our lives and our ability to live. It is our responsibility to take care of our mother and when taking care of our mother, we take care of ourselves. Women, being all of them feminine, are the manifestation of Mother Earth in human form.
- b. We demand that the international community and governments recognize and respect our rights to our territories. This includes our right to decide what to do with our lands and territories and to develop them in an integrated and sustained manner in accordance with our own worldview.
- c. We demand that the governments which offer our territories to foreign investors, specifically to mining companies, respect these rights. They must also consult with us fully about the development and investment projects planned to be carried out in our

1. See: <http://www.naciónmulticultural.unam.mx/movimientosindigenas/docs/92.pdf>.



territories. We have the right to be involved in the decision-making process regarding these matters. The lands of the indigenous peoples, which have been destroyed by the mining corporations or have been used as toxic, radioactive and dangerous-waste dumps, must be fully restored by the companies or governments that have allowed such destruction.

- d. We demand that our inalienable rights to our cultural heritage be recognized and respected. We will resist before any process that tries to destroy this heritage or alienate us from our resources and traditional knowledge.

Based on this process of global coordination of indigenous women, they founded the International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIWF/FIMI) which, in 2006, introduced an alternative report on violence against women, known as *Mairin Iwanka Raya*², in which Indigenous Women assume their position to confront violence throughout the world.

This global study aims to collect and systematize information on Environmental Justice and indigenous women, collected in local, national and international areas. In turn, efforts have been made to highlight some components, including: 1) the spiritual dimension of environmental or ecological violence against women and the need to focus the discussion on violence in the "entirety" of the person, considering that each indigenous woman is part of a community and in this process violence is contextualized and its particular features are studied; and 2) the need for an intercultural perspective to analyze strategies achieving Environmental Justice, with the aim of building more peaceful societies. Likewise, this study seeks to identify the experiences of Environmental Justice and the Observatory of Indigenous Women against Violence created by the IIWF/FIMI.

Throughout the last decades, as part of the global strategy of Environmental Justice, indigenous women have sought to make their voices heard in different arenas so as to draw attention to the impact they suffer resulting from adverse environmental effects. Recently, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues reiterated its concern about ecological violence and its impacts on indigenous women and girls, and took note of the recommendations of the III International Indigenous Women's Symposium on environment and reproductive health that took place on April 14 and 15, 2018. The invitation made by the UN Permanent Forum to the Inter-Agency Support Group and the procedures of the UN Human Rights Council on this issue are an expression of the long road taken.

This is a qualitative study, whose bibliographic, historical and technical review of the global and local discussions have been carried out around the topic of Environmental Justice. Likewise, in-depth interviews and focus groups have been conducted with representatives of Indigenous Peoples, mainly indigenous women. Experiences have also been analyzed and documented in local, national and global spheres in which indigenous women have played a leading role, including the Global Leadership School and the AYNÍ Fund, both led by the IIWF.

2. <http://www.fimi-iiwf.org/archivos/8162f56478b843333dc95a1f5f381ab1.pdf>.



In order to achieve Environmental Justice, indigenous women are proposing healing and empowerment strategies, as well as the strengthening of indigenous ancestral knowledge to find the way enabling “our spirits to return to us and us and restore our collective dignity, our identity and our confidence in our own strength. To this end, we will have to work collaboratively in order to amplify our voices, share our experiences and information, develop strategies and create solutions that we can jointly undertake. We also reaffirm our pressing need to expand and strengthen our partnerships in order to address our shared concerns more effectively.”³

3. III International Indigenous Women’s Symposium on environment and reproductive health. April 2018.



2. Current debates on Environmental Justice



The use of the term Environmental Justice began in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, related to social struggles in the context of the debates on environmental injustices that Afro-American populations were going through. Authors such as Crawford (2009, cited in Belmont, 2012) consider that racist practices turned African-American groups into victims of social and environmental injustices. It is from the 1990s that actions in the search for solutions to such injustices have been taken, expressing for the first time the term “Environmental Justice,” thus representing a symbol of the reclaiming of rights.

In 1991, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held in Washington, D.C. At the end of the summit on September 27, the delegates adopted seventeen principles framed on the importance of processes and structures that broke away from the environmental differences and injustices in which this ethnic community has lived. According to Martínez Alier (2008), this movement was driven by local cases of incidences of diseases resulting from pollution in poor African-American neighborhoods in the United States.

So, when speaking of Environmental Justice, a notion related to Rights is automatically defined, as well as the importance of their vindication in places of disadvantage that confront situations of environmental crisis. Although this term is based on the construction and discussion of more disadvantaged groups, many external nongovernmental organizations have coined this notion to local populations and have incorporated it into their daily work and negotiation processes around socio-environmental conflicts.

The development of the discussion has gained interesting characteristics, since the concept of Environmental Justice was taken up again by some countries such as South Africa, where the notion was raised in its environmental law; in Brazil, where the Brazilian Environmental Justice Network was set up and legal provisions were incorporated; in Germany, the Action Program for Environment and Health in the Rhine-Westphalia region was established, and different basic aspects of the Environmental Justice discussion were considered (Ramírez, et.al., 2015). These authors consider that despite the fact that the term has been incorporated at the level of policies and discussions in countries, its implementation has been slow or stalled, losing even the initial sense with which the notion was came into being.

2.1. Definition of Environmental Justice

There is no clear definition of what Environmental Justice is, since it implies a set of elements, which have been used differently according to the objectives and needs of each player. An important aspect that should be noted is that Environmental Justice especially integrates elements of rights, recognizing social and environmental differences and impacts on access to and use of resources as well as a healthy environment.





According to Arriaga and Pardo (2009), the term Environmental Justice is related to the most disadvantaged social groups in society, those with a low economic profile or ethnic minorities who are mostly those who disproportionately suffer from the negative impacts on the environment, which results from living in areas with high levels of pollutants.

The American Environmental Justice Movement incorporated into the first and third principles of Environmental Justice, approved in the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, that: a. Environmental Justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, as well as the interdependence of all species, and the right to not to suffer from ecological destruction, as well as Environmental Justice as the basis of the right to ethical, balanced and responsible use of land and renewable resources, in favor of a sustainable planet for human beings and other living creatures (cited in Reichmann, 2003).

Authors such as Reichmann (2003) define certain elements that should be key to be able to treat the issue of ecological justice, such as sustainability, how to respect the limits and think ahead about the future, the notions of environmental space and ecological footprint, as well as the equal parts principle in which underlies the topic of equality and justice in that all humans should have access to a healthy environment, and the same consumption opportunities in societies.

2.2. Contribution of Indigenous Women to the debate on Environmental Justice

Indigenous Women have contributed to the debate on Environmental Justice from their own points of view and approaches. As previously indicated, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995⁴ was a setting that allowed for coordinating the voices and positions of indigenous women from different regions around the world.

In the Beijing Declaration of indigenous women in the world⁵, indigenous women recur to an image they have continually maintained in their approach, which consists in identifying the Earth as the Mother, linking it to their lives and ability to live, but assuming their shared responsibility for its protection, pointing out from there that it is fundamental to have the right to self-determination over their territories as peoples in order to fulfill that responsibility.

They pointed out that these rights have been affected by the issues resulting from the constant colonization processes, the oppressions they are still facing as peoples and the consequent impoverishment, but reaffirming that despite such limitations, the Mother Earth and water sources have still been protected.

A central aspect in the stances of indigenous women has been their disseminating role of the indigenous worldview, science, technology, art and culture, their own organizational systems, as well as the sociopolitical and economic systems of their peoples, which harmonize with

4. Fourth World Conference on Women, held in September 1995. <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/es/about>

5. Beijing Declaration of the Indigenous Women NGO Forum, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China.

Approved and signed on September 7, 1995 in the tent for indigenous women, Huairou, Beijing, China, <http://www.naciónmulticultural.unam.mx/movimientosindigenas/docs/92.pdf>.



the natural laws of the Mother Earth. They recognize that they are respectful of the ethical and aesthetic values, insights, philosophy, and spirituality that preserve and nourish the Mother Earth.

Through scientific missions of ethnobotanical collection and research, they identified bioprospecting as one of the issues that have an impact on the possibility of fully enjoying their “environmental” rights, which was pointed out as another expression of recolonization, transforming into a commercial item what is considered sacred by their communities. This aspect was later elaborated by the IWF (2006) when it is stated that the categories of family, community and State do not adequately account for emerging forms of violence such as biological piracy, genetic piracy, trade in human organs and climate change, which impose a disproportionate risk for indigenous women, since these issues originate in the global sphere. Therefore, the inclusion of a “transnational” violence category was suggested in order to take into account violence against indigenous women resulting from or being manifested in international arenas.⁶

As early as 1995, Indigenous Women expressed their concern about the threat to the disappearance of biological diversity and cultural resources, since it would destroy indigenous wisdom, spirituality and culture, increasing the conflicts and displacement of their ancestral territories. Against this background, they stated that they would continue to freely use their biodiversity to meet their local needs, without eroding the biodiverse base of their local economies, and that they would continue committing themselves to revitalizing the biological and cultural heritage of their peoples.

Additionally, the bias of the new world order in favor of large agribusinesses was also a concern, with the resulting loss of much of the traditional subsistence and economic activities of indigenous peoples, such as hunting, gathering and harvesting, reindeer husbandry, subsistence farming, fishing, small craft businesses, as well as the impact on the non-economic activities of indigenous women that have been ignored and covered up, despite the fact that they preserve the existence of indigenous peoples.

It is worth highlighting the requests made in the Declaration⁷, as they are still current at present:

The recognition and respect of the rights to indigenous territories, including the right to decide what to do with their lands and territories and develop them in a comprehensive and sustained manner in accordance with their own worldview. They demanded that governments offering indigenous territories to foreign investors, particularly mining companies, respect those rights; and demanded as members of the indigenous peoples to be kept fully informed about the development projects and investments scheduled to be carried out in their territories.

They also demanded that governments and companies restore the lands of the indigenous peoples that have been destroyed by the mining corporations or that have been used as toxic, radioactive and dangerous waste dumps, and demanded the cessation of the mining activity

6. IWF. Mairin Iwanka Raya. 2006.

7. 110 Indigenous women representing 26 countries met to write a declaration describing their demands as Indigenous Women and presented a remarkable critique of the Beijing Platform for Action called “The Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women.”



engaged for the extraction of uranium in their lands and the carrying out of nuclear tests in their territories and water resources.

It is important to note that since 1995 indigenous women made it very clear in their statements that Human Rights violations are not only based on gender, but also on the *interaction* between gender and other aspects of their identities. That position has been reaffirmed in multiple events in recent decades. In the Mandaluyong Declaration of the Global Conference on Indigenous Women, Climate Change and REDD Plus, Philippines in 2010⁸, where the different impacts which they deal with were analyzed, they reaffirmed the complications resulting from multiple discriminations they are victims of, based on gender and ethnic identity.

The Indigenous Women's statements in Beijing in 1995 have still been current in the recent decades and have been used in various advocacy activities of indigenous women in different local, national, regional and global contexts, and stated in resolutions on indigenous women at CSW, namely: (CSW49 (2005): Resolution 49/7 (E/CN.6/2005/11), CBD, negotiations on climate change, among others.

It is important to highlight the fact that in all the positions of indigenous women, they reaffirm the dimension of collective Human Rights as members of their peoples. It is noted that for the CSW 57 (Commission on the Status of Women), organizations of indigenous women around the world wrote up a Declaration about the forms of violence they deal with, and in its articles they raised the need *"to consider the negative impact of pollution and the destruction of the environment - including extractive industries - in the life of indigenous women as a form of violence from the perspective of collective rights."*⁹

The study on violence against indigenous women, Mairin Iwanka Raya, published in 2007, has been a milestone in the analysis of declarations, documents of regional meetings and conferences of Indigenous Women of the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia and the Pacific region, which includes diverse aspects that are mutually interrelated and that influence in creating manifestations of violence. From the indigenous women's perspective, the issue of Environmental Justice is one of the manifestations of violence and, according to the study, the impact resulting from the manifestation of environmental racism. For example, the disproportionate use of indigenous territories as residual sites for industrial waste incites violence within their ancestral territories (IIWF/FIMI, 2006).

In 2014, on the occasion of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, indigenous women held the Indigenous Women's Summit in Lima Peru in 2013, whose results fueled the debate on climate justice from the proposals of indigenous women. It is important to note that the Lima

8. 80 indigenous women coming from 60 indigenous nations and peoples and representing our communities and organizations from 29 countries: Aotearoa (New Zealand), Bangladesh, Burma, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Micronesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Tanzania, Suriname, the USA and Vietnam.

9. Declaration at CSW57, available in Spanish and English. 57th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN. March 4 to 15, 2013, United Nations, New York DECLARATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN AT CSW57. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/IndigWomen_Declaración_CSW57_sp.pdf.



Declaration began with taking up the recommendations of the Declaration of Indigenous Women in Beijing, 18 years earlier.¹⁰

In Lima, they reaffirmed the responsibility to protect the Earth, our Mother, as “a historical, sacred and ongoing responsibility of the Indigenous Peoples around the world, who fulfill the role of ancestral guardians of lands, waters, oceans, glaciers, mountains and forests of Mother Earth”, “for the primary role of indigenous women in the protection and preservation of Mother Earth and its cycles” and, the same way that they did years ago, they assume the commitment to defend “with our lives, our lands, waters, territories and resources, which are the source of our survival.”

The Lima Declaration reiterates aspects of geographical distribution and physical areas of lands, waters, oceans, glaciers, mountains and forests, but reaffirms cultural, social and spiritual relationships, as well as the values and responsibilities linking women with their ancestral territories.

Although mining is still one of the issues generating conflicts and claims to the problems identified in 1995, forestry concessions and energy programs are added. In addition to the demands for the right to self-determination, autonomy, and free, prior and informed consent are specifically added. Regarding Human Rights, indigenous women request the Governments to recognize and respect the Rights to land, territory and resources, “enshrined in the Indigenous Common Law, in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and in other international instruments on Human Rights.”¹¹

Another issue incorporated into the debate on Environmental Justice by women has been the international recognition of ecological violence. The process has followed the Symposium for Indigenous Women in California (2010), Chickaloon, Alaska (2012), New York (2018). These events shared information about the negative impacts resulting from mining, oil extraction, mercury contamination, nuclear testing, uranium testing, processing and storage, pesticides and persistent organic pollutants (POPs), military landfills, incineration of toxic waste, desecration of sacred sites and spaces, introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and transgenic foods, and collection of genetic material.

The impact of pollutants on the right to health and reproductive justice of Indigenous Peoples has been analyzed in the events, and specifically on indigenous women, not only because of the impact on them, but also because of the repercussions on the lives, health and development of children and babies that have not yet been born, representing a serious threat to survival of Peoples, Cultures and Nations. They estimated that these conditions violate their right to subsistence, cultural and spiritual survival, self-determination and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). In various meetings, they have identified that there is a relationship between

10. Lima Declaration of the World Conference of Indigenous Women. Indigenous Women Towards Inclusion and Visibility. Lima, October 30, 2013. <http://www.forestpeoples.org/es/topics/las-cuestiones-de-genero/news/2013/11/declaración-de-lima-de-la-conferencia-global-de-mujeres>.

11. Lima Declaration. October, 2013.



environmental toxic substances and reproductive health, as well as the impacts resulting from environmental violence.¹²

In this context, indigenous women began to coin and promote the term “ecological or environmental violence,” as the deliberate and lethal exposure to pesticides, mining waste and other sources of toxic pollution.¹³

Some aspects about which they have expressed their concern have been:

- The information on the presence of contaminants is hidden from or not provided to indigenous communities. Even when the effects of chemical substances or practices to which they are exposed are widely known or documented by the companies, the scientific community and the governments. Indigenous peoples bear the responsibility of demonstrating the cause of the health issues they are experiencing, and the reports of anecdotal cases that they present are discarded because “they are not verified” or “they lack scientific basis;” meanwhile sexual and environmental violence continues being perpetrated under a veil of secrecy and impunity.¹⁴
- The federal and international laws in force authorize the industrial sector, army and governments to knowingly produce, emit, store, transport, export, import and pour out dangerous chemical substances and radioactive materials, and in turn, to expand their polluting, such as the production of fossil fuels, hydraulic fracturing, extraction and crushing of uranium, introduction of transgenic seeds, incineration of toxic waste and intensive agriculture in pesticides.

Another relevant issue in the case of indigenous women are the issues of criminalization and killings of indigenous women, defenders of collective territories and natural resources, which will be discussed later in detail. In her latest report to the UN Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples expressed her concern over the increase in attacks, acts of violence, criminalization and threats to which indigenous peoples are subjected, particularly in the context of large-scale works related to extractive industries, agribusiness, infrastructure, hydroelectric dams and logging.¹⁵

She pointed out that aggressions and criminalization affect a wide range of Human Rights, and that they should be analyzed within the framework of the causes and effects of criminalization and violence affecting Indigenous Peoples, and understood and addressed in the specific framework of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and international and regional Human Rights instruments, which recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination and their traditional national lands, territories and resources, their self-government,

12. III Symposium on contaminants and reproductive health justice. New York, 2018.

13. Three international indigenous women’s symposia on environment violence and reproductive health have been held. California (2010); Chickaloon, Alaska (2012); Nueva York, 2018.

14. I International Indigenous Women’s Symposium on Environment Violence and Reproductive Health.

15. Human rights council. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. 39th session. September 10-28, 2018.



their cultures and their ways of life. She emphasized that the activities against indigenous people affect both the members of indigenous communities individually, and the communities as a whole.

Regarding indigenous women, she pointed out the smear campaigns against them as efforts to de-empower them and isolate them from their families and communities.





3. International framework on Environmental justice and Indigenous Women



As previously mentioned, some countries, such as Mexico, Colombia, Spain and Germany, have incorporated provisions of Environmental Justice into their national pieces of legislations into their legislative bodies. More recently, countries such as Colombia and New Zealand have given areas such as rivers and natural areas the status as right holders, transferring rights of every human being and claiming the vision of indigenous peoples in relation to nature as a living and paramount part of our living spaces¹⁶.

In the international framework of Human Rights, there are a series of tools to protect the rights to environmental and intergenerational health and to live free from environmental violence, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Murcia and Puyano (2016) conducted a review of the tools and standards of international rights that support indigenous women in their struggle to achieve Environmental Justice in their lands and territories, establishing that there are tools that can be used to encourage and strengthen their participation, as well as to achieve a safer environment.

3.1. Tools to promote the participation of Indigenous Women.¹⁷

<p>Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1979).</p>	<p>Art- 14-2. Government Parties shall take all the appropriate measures to eradicate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, in conditions of equality between men and women, their participation in rural development and her benefits, and in particular to ensure the right to: Participate in the development and execution of development plans at all levels.</p>
	<p>39. The current phenomenon of globalization means that the inclusion of women and their participation in international organizations, on equal terms with men, is increasingly important. It is incumbent on all governments to integrate a gender perspective and Women's Human Rights into the programs of all the international bodies. Many key decisions on global issues, such as the establishment of peace and conflict resolution, military spending and nuclear disarmament, development and the environment, foreign aid and economic restructuring, are adopted with scarce participation of women in stark contrast to the role that relies on the same spheres at the non-governmental level.</p>

16. Further information on this topic at: <https://www.elsoldemexico.com.mx/doble-via/ecologia/R%C3%ADo-neozelandés-el-primero-en-ser-reconocido-como-“persona-jur%C3%ADdica”-218590.html>.

17. Murcia y Puyano (2013).





<p>Agenda 21 (1992).</p>	<p>Strategic objective K.1. To achieve the women's participation in environmental decision-making at all levels: 253. Measures to be taken by governments, at all levels, including the municipal authorities as appropriate: a) Ensure opportunities for women, including those belonging to indigenous populations, so that they can participate in environmental decision-making at all levels, in their capacity as administrators, project developers and planners and as executors and assessors of environmental projects.</p> <p>Strategic objective K.2. To incorporate gender concerns and perspectives into policies and programs in favor of the sustainable development: 256. Measures to be adopted by governments: a) Integrate women, including indigenous women, their perspectives and insights, on an equal footing with men, in the decision-making regarding sustainable management of resources and in the formulation of sustainable development policies and programs, particularly those aimed at addressing and preventing the environmental degradation of land.</p>
<p>Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995).</p>	<p>Strategic objective A.1. Measures to be adopted: "58. q) Adopt special measures to promote and strengthen policies and programs for indigenous women allowing their full participation and in which their cultural diversity is respected, so that they have opportunities and possibilities of choice in the development processes in order to eradicate the poverty that affects them."</p> <p>Strategic objective G.1. Measures to be adopted "190. g) Encourage greater participation of indigenous women in decision-making at all levels."</p> <p>Strategic objective K.1. Measures to be adopted: "253. a) Ensure opportunities for women, including those belonging to indigenous populations, to participate in decision-making regarding the environment at all levels, even in their capacity as administrators, project developers and planners, and executors and assessors of projects related to the environment."</p> <p>Strategic objective k.2. Measures to be adopted by governments "256. a) Integrate women, including indigenous women, their perspectives and insights, on an equal footing with men, in the decision-making regarding sustainable management of resources and in the formulation of sustainable development policies and programs, particularly those aimed at addressing and preventing land and environmental degradation."</p>
<p>Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Observation 15 (2002).</p>	<p>16. a). Particularly, Government parties should adopt measures to ensure that: a) Women are not excluded from the decision-making processes on water resources and rights. The disproportionate burden on women in obtaining water must be relieved.</p>
<p>Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women. Decision 44 / II (2011).</p>	<p>All the stakeholders should ensure that measures related to climate change and disaster risk reduction take into account gender issues, be sensitive to indigenous knowledge systems and respect Human Rights. The right of women to participate at all levels of decision-making must be guaranteed in policies and programs on climate change.</p>



3.2. Tools on the Right to a Safe Environment¹⁸

<p>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).</p>	<p>Art. 14-2: “The Government Parties shall adopt all the appropriate measures to eradicate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on an equal footing with men, their participation in the rural development and its benefits, and specially shall ensure The Right to: enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in the sphere of housing, health services, electricity, water supply, transport and communications”.</p>
<p>Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of OHCHR. Resolution 1997/19 (1997).</p>	<p>Being aware that in order to eliminate discrimination against women it is necessary to consider the specific socio-economic background of women,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It affirms that pursuant to law, discrimination against women in relation to the availability, purchase and preservation of land, property and housing, as well as financing related to land, property and housing, constitutes a violation of the women’s human right to protection against discrimination; 2. It reaffirms the right of women to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social Rights and urges Governments to adopt all the necessary measures to amend or repeal legislations and policies relating to land, property and housing that deny women secure land tenure, access and equal rights to land, property and housing, to encourage a change in customs and traditions that deny women secure land tenure, access and equal rights to land, property and housing and to enact and enforce laws for the protection and promotion of women’s right to acquire, inherit, rent or lease lands, properties and housing.
<p>Special Rapporteur on violence against women. Report 2000.</p>	<p>68. The housing policy is directly related to the issue of violence against women. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights establishes the right of every person, male or female, to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing. 69. The lack of adequate housing creates domestic conditions that incite violence. Women and children spend more time at home than any other family member and, therefore, are more vulnerable to pernicious and unsanitary environments and lack of drinking water. In addition, the conditions of overcrowded housing, with high levels of tension and low tolerance, together with unemployment or poverty and the resulting economic anxiety increase the risk of domestic violence.</p>
<p>Rapporteur on the Right to housing. Report 2003.</p>	<p>31. Indigenous and tribal women. It is necessary to examine legislation and policies on indigenous groups and their concrete effects on indigenous women. The preservation laws by virtue of which indigenous groups are removed from their traditional environment can result in deterioration of their standard of living and the dissolution of their indigenous cultures and relationships that may especially affect indigenous women. There are very few laws in which intercultural discrimination is contemplated, and indigenous women are at risk of double discrimination in access to housing and civic services.</p>
<p>Commission on Human Rights. Resolution 2005/25.</p>	<p>It urges Governments to urgently address discrimination, inequality and historical injustices suffered by women in vulnerable situations, including indigenous women, in particular to ensure their equal ownership, access and control of the land and the rights to own property and enjoy adequate housing;</p>

18. Ibid.



<p>Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights defenders (2010).</p>	<p>103. It should be noted that the abovementioned risks and issues to which women Human Rights defenders and those dedicated to women's rights or gender issues are exposed when trying to carry out their legitimate and peaceful activities cannot be conceived regardless of the political, social, economic, environmental and other systemic factors that produce and reproduce conflicts, displacements, inequality, violence and the patriarchal behaviors and practices that cause these problems. The safety of these defenders is inextricably linked to the security of their communities and can only be fully achieved in the context of a holistic approach that includes, among other things, the consolidation of democracy, the fight against impunity, the reduction of economic inequalities and the struggle for social and Environmental Justice.</p>
<p>Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights defenders (2011).</p>	<p>The Governments must fully acknowledge the significant work carried out by defenders working on environmental and land issues in trying to strike a balance between economic development and respect for the environment, including the right to use land, wealth and natural resources and the rights of certain groups, such as indigenous peoples and minorities.</p>

3.3. Tools on the right to environmental integrity in the territories¹⁹

<p>Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Observation 15 (2002).</p>	<p>16. The access of indigenous peoples to water resources in their ancestral lands is protected from all illicit transgression and pollution. Governments must provide resources for indigenous peoples to plan, exercise and control their access to water.</p>
<p>Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2009).</p>	<p>194. In relation to indigenous and tribal peoples, the protection of natural resources in ancestral territories, and the environmental integrity of such territories, is necessary to guarantee certain fundamental rights of their members, such as life, dignity, personal integrity, health, property, privacy or information. These rights are directly affected whenever pollution, deforestation, water pollution, or other types of environmental damage occur in ancestral territories. It implies that the Government is obliged to adopt preventive and positive actions aimed at guaranteeing an environment that does not compromise the ability of indigenous people to exercise their most basic Human Rights. In this line, the IACHR has explained that the right to life protected by both the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the American Convention on Human Rights "is not limited (...) to the protection against loss of life. The Government parties must take certain positive measures to safeguard life and physical integrity. Severe environmental pollution can be a threat to the life and health of the human being, and as the case may be, result into the obligation of the State to take reasonable measures to avoid such risk, or the necessary measures to respond when people have been injured.</p>
<p>Independent expert on the environment. Report 2016.</p>	<p>81. The Governments have the primary obligation not to discriminate when applying their environmental laws and policies. In addition, the obligations of the Governments are greater with respect to the members of certain groups that may be especially vulnerable to environmental damage, in particular women, children and indigenous peoples.</p>

19. Ibid.



	<p>83. The Governments have an obligation, at the national level, to take adaptation measures in order to protect vulnerable populations against the effects of climate change and, at the international level, to cooperate in order to facilitate the protection of vulnerable communities, wherever they may be. Within the context of all the measures adopted, including measures to mitigate climate change and adapt to it, the rights of the most vulnerable must be protected. Renewable energy projects and forest protection and work, although they may be highly attractive as methods to reduce or offset greenhouse gas emissions, do not follow Human Rights standards. The projects to be proposed for indigenous peoples' territories, for example, must comply with the obligations contracted with respect to these peoples, in particular, where appropriate, the obligation to facilitate their participation in the decision-making processes and not to proceed without their free, prior and informed consent.</p>
<p>Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2015).</p>	<p>279. The impacts of heavy metals in the human body can be irreversible if the Governments do not adopt urgent and special measures to address each specific case. For this reason, the IACHR considers that it is necessary for the Governments to adopt measures allowing the restoration of degraded and polluted territories due to extractive activities, which should include the implementation of special programs including health care for indigenous peoples as one of their major lines of action.</p>

An important mechanism, which can be the basis for defending the rights of indigenous women in relation to Environmental Justice, are the different rapporteurs of special rights within the United Nations system such as the special rapporteur on Women's Rights, the special rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the special rapporteur on toxic substances, among others. In each workspace of these people, the topic of indigenous peoples has been taken up again and especially including these of indigenous women and the impacts on the violation of their rights, and even on the subject of the impacts on environmental imbalances in their communities, territories and in their bodies.

In the 56th session of the commission on the status of women, in 2012²⁰, the Governments assumed certain commitments, which focused on promoting policies and programs to guarantee the full participation of women in political and social spaces, but also included the recognition that discrimination increases the conditions that generate violence against women, and encourage governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society to adopt appropriate measures to promote the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and respect their lands, resources, territories and resources and their contribution to sustainable development.

Regarding the issue of ecological violence, the Special Rapporteur on toxic substances pointed out before the Permanent Forum on indigenous issues in 2017²¹ that their predecessors had pointed out for decades the impact of pollutants on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, since

20. CSW56 (2012) Resolution 56/4 Indigenous women: key agents for the eradication of poverty and famine (E/CN.6/2012/16); Session 57 at CSW "Agreed Conclusions." (E/CN.6/2013.L5),

21. Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes.

Seventeenth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

Theme: "Indigenous peoples' collective rights to land, territories and resources" April 16, 2018UN Headquarters, New York, New York.



they are present in the lands, territories and natural resources of the indigenous communities, not because they have made the decisions, but as a result of the abuse and lack of respect for their individual and collective rights. He added that it is a global issue as it occurs in all sociocultural regions and pointed out the effects such as cancer, abortions, congenital defects, learning limitations, diabetes, all linked to the presence of pesticides, toxic chemicals and other environmental problems.

The same Rapporteur expressed that despite the progress on this issue in some countries, the same countries continue manufacturing and exporting these pollutants and export them to poor countries with poor systems for handling chemicals, in addition to their shipping by air and water, thus impacting on people's health. Among the limitations stand out the following:

- a) Lack of regulation of pollutants. Among more than 1000 pollutants, less than 30 follow some regulations.
- b) Children's rights do not include provisions against pollutants.
- c) The FPIC of indigenous peoples is not acknowledged, despite that this right is consigned in the Rotterdam Convention. Although the Governments have the right to "consent," if there is no reply after 90 days, pollutants are transported to them.
- d) The Convention does not acknowledge the rights to physical integrity, security and self-determination.
- e) The Convention has no mechanisms for control and transparency.

In the report presented by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, she states that indigenous women are facing a great variety of violations against their rights, and that such vulnerabilities are related to patriarchal power structures, different forms of discrimination and marginalization based on gender, class, ethnic origin and socioeconomic circumstances and violations against the right to self-determination and control of resources (Tauli-Corpuz, 2015). This position is also expressed by Rashida Manjoo, the Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights in 2012. Her report states that certain imposed economic policies have aggravated the conditions of vulnerability of indigenous women, forcing them to migrate locally and regionally, which results in poor standards of living.

All these mechanisms are an important tool for indigenous women to find spaces for reflecting on the violation of their rights as indigenous peoples, but at the same time to make their positions and proposals known in the discussions and seek Environmental Justice from their voices and point of view.

Taking into consideration the position of indigenous women stated in the First Indigenous Women Summit in Oaxaca in 2013, in relation to the environmental issue, three important points become clear as a response; they are the right to the integrity of the environment in indigenous territories, which is achieved through participation and a safe environment.



4. Major findings



a. Conceptualization of Environmental Justice from the perspective of Indigenous Women.

The term Environmental Justice is a foreign concept to the culture of Indigenous Peoples. However, they have made an effort to adapt the concept to their own law, greater law or *lex naturalis*, since it refers to “the right to our territories, sacred sites, traditional medicine, conservation sites.”²²

As pointed out by an indigenous leader, Masai from Kenya, talking about Environmental Justice immediately takes you to the starting point, which means that Environmental Justice is sought, because there is injustice in this area, especially because we consider that the basic precepts must be related to social inclusion when we refer to that subject ²³.

In this context, indigenous women link the concept of Environmental Justice with the certainty that, as women and indigenous peoples, they must fully enjoy the Right to health, dignity, culture, life, a healthy and safe environment, as well as clean and healthy foods. In the interviews conducted throughout this study, it was reaffirmed that their peoples enjoy the inherent right to have clean water, air, land and food and that many of them have traditional knowledge and practices to manage these resources, such as the traditional and folk healers. They also expressed their concern about this issue, since their daughters enjoy the right to be born healthy and free of toxic substances.

Based on these aspects, Environmental Justice, from the perspective of indigenous women, refers to the respect for the ancestral territories of indigenous peoples, their resources and their related means of life, through the creation or application of Human Rights already set forth in the respective Political Constitutions and in international Human Rights instruments, Historical rights they possess as peoples that cohabit a territory.

In this context, the term “environmental injustice” derives from the effects of the history of colonization, which has led the negative path for the extraction of natural resources up to the present. So, Environmental Justice necessarily refers to the measures that must be adopted for the restitution of that historical debt, by the Governments, companies or external complainants in relation to the abuse in the extraction of resources, pollution and sociocultural, economic, politicians and social effects resulting from their actions in the indigenous territories and their population. The central element involving an act of Environmental Justice is specifically that rich countries acknowledge environmental obligations towards poor countries, translated into sustainable development.²⁴

22. C. Herrera Interview. June 2018.

23. K.O. Riamit Interview, September 2018.

24. VTC Interview. June 2018.



In this context, Environmental Justice means that those groups and peoples that have safeguarded the environment can have full access to the benefits of this hard work. Any benefit that can be obtained from the environment should be first for those who have taken care of the environment. Most importantly, when addressing the issue of Environmental Justice, it should be clear that anyone who destroys the environment should also be punished.²⁵

Therefore, it is required that the indigenous women's human right to have access to a healthy environment is respected "in order to enjoy everything that the ancestors have left us through the years and that our territory is not affected or invaded by companies that come to extract natural resources."²⁶

A summary of some characteristics of the concept of Environmental Justice, identified throughout the study, is as follows:

b. Environmental Justice from a gender-focused view of Indigenous Peoples.

There is a difference in the conception of Environmental Justice between indigenous women and men. It has become clear in the different interviews that women conceive Environmental Justice from the perspective of spirituality, food security, impact on traditional knowledge and the very structure of indigenous culture. For indigenous women, it implies elements related to the seeding, protection of traditional seeds, wisdom and knowledge passed on intergenerationally.

In accordance with the Law of origin, women are responsible for being the "keepers" of secrets and seeds, and in some indigenous peoples that role is expressed through the abundance tree.²⁷

A young indigenous woman from Asia believes that the difference also consists in the fact that there are many community systems with a strong patriarchal structure, and inequality and equality are seen differently by men. Indigenous men see women as equals, there is no identification of a differentiated environmental impact between men and women. However, it should not be like this because women carry the heaviest burden in terms of environmental injustice. This is something that many indigenous men do not see.²⁸

In the spatial dichotomy of indigenous space, the "chagra" or "milpa" is conceived as a sacred territory, where food is grown, but it is also the basis of human reproduction. It is the sacred place where sons and daughters are conceived, the space of procreation as it is the space of transformation and diversification of the food base sustaining indigenous peoples. These spaces have a strong spiritual vision in the sense that it is where you live with the owner of seeds

25. Interview Helen Magata, September 2018.

26. Interview CV, June 2018.

27. Tree of Abundance, a myth that addresses the origin of the Amazon. According to the story, if one appears in the territory, one can observe a reality in the form of a tree. It is captured in the myth called 'Monilla Amena,' which means food tree. " It comes from the Uitoto community. The story refers to a tree that provided food and that grew until it was knocked down. Once on the ground, it became the great Amazon. <http://agenciadenoticias.unal.edu.co/detalle/article/arbol-de-la-abundancia-origen-de-la-vida-humana.html>.

28. Interview with HBM. June 2018.



and food, where traditional medicine is learned. It is the space for the passing on of wisdom and knowledge, it is the space of cultural reproduction of women.

On the other hand, men are responsible for feeding in relation to the care for the land, hunting activities, care for the lakes. They are responsible for safeguarding the fishing sites, they have to care for the territory as a “home,” part of the basis of the people’s future.

More than being different, these two roles are complementary to each other, which is an important aspect in indigenous cultures. This is illustrated by an indigenous leader of the Tuareg communities in Africa when telling about how men and women participate in choosing the area where their camps will be built, and how men decide on the territory; but it is women who “read” the surroundings to decide on the internal distribution of space, always taking into account the spiritual and ecological elements of the environment (TIN HINAN and INFOE, 2011).

These two perspectives work for a common goal: preservation and respect of the rights and good living of indigenous cultures. For indigenous women, the issue of collectivity is a fundamental element for cultural survival, and therefore, for achieving a comprehensive vision of Environmental Justice in their lands and territories. Even so, it is important that we continue working on processes to raise awareness of the differentiated impacts, and joint proposals that can be brought forward in order to enhance the people’s good living.

c. The activities carried out by women with respect to the protection of land and territory are also different.

Women’s work is more linked to the land, but if compromised, their role is diminished, as well as their capacity to provide for their family. Women consider, therefore, that because of that intimate relationship with land and resources, they are the first ones who disproportionately suffer the effects of disasters, and in general they value their contribution to reduce pollution, erosion of biodiversity, and to confront climate change.

As a result of the differentiation in relation to the ecological environment between men and women, we see that in some indigenous communities, women identify broader and more specific indicators to the environmental changes in their environments. Therefore, their actions before these indicators also tend to be more varied than those proposed by men (Yana, 2008).

d. The impact of environmental disasters affects the exercise of their rights, and increases violence.

The use of toxic chemicals has an impact on women in a specific and negative way, resulting in diseases, fertility problems, and the inability to produce food. Export of chemical products manufactured in countries where its use is prohibited, causes fertility problems, changes in plants due to pest problems, as well as in the environment and indigenous peoples’ lifestyles, particularly those of women.





In the Arctic area, an indigenous Chukchi woman from the north of Siberia states that companies get rid of oil barrels improperly in their territories, resulting in soil contamination, and an irreversible impact on the fauna that is the basis of reindeer's and other pastoralist of Afriac like the Tuareg feeding, which in turn are the economic base of this indigenous people. A smaller number of reindeer results in the increase of unemployment rate among indigenous peoples and precariousness of their lives (TinHinan and INFOE, 2011). This situation leads strong consequences in the people's internal fabric. So, violence becomes something beyond environmental impacts on women, also in a lack of food security and negative impacts on personal security.

The Tuareg people are a nomadic pastoralist people from the Sahel region in North Africa. They extend and move through five countries: Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. It is a people which was victim of many impacts resulting from environmental changes, since rain in the semi-arid areas from the Sahel region are less and less predictable, and the gradual increase in temperatures has had impacts on their grazing herds (sheep, camels, goats, etc.). Since 1973, severe droughts have resulted in massive losses of livestock and food shortages for the Tuareg, these environmental pressures have also had consequences in clashes with other ethnic communities and rebellions due to the lack of recognition of rights in countries such as Mali and Niger (IWGIA, 2005; Wiggins et.al, 2009). In Tuareg populations, environmental impacts have had sociocultural effects and changes, such as the definition of settlements or areas that have been called "fixing sites", where since the 1990s people have begun to establish themselves permanently in areas where they may have a lesser impact on environmental changes, and mitigation infrastructure for climate damage has been established, such as rainwater retention dikes (Schmite and Nin, 2015). These changes have strong impacts on the culture and transfer of indigenous knowledge, since the entire livelihood system is disrupted with the establishment of these settlements. There are also other types of dynamics in the region that also affect their livelihoods, and that have to do with external development processes such as road construction, thus weakening traditional structures and livelihoods..

e. The concept of Environmental Justice is linked to sustainability.

Women cultivate, collect fruits, and ensure the community's sustainability. The role of indigenous women as protectors of the land, territory and natural resources has been acknowledged, and this role of preservation and ecological protection is linked to the sacred relationship with the environment. This way of life identifies them as caretakers, saved guardians of ecological health not only of their communities, but also of the planet.²⁹

According to indigenous Twa/pygmy women from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the destruction of nature is like genocide since it implies the destruction of the base of traditional knowledge, and subsistence of cultures. The importance of the forest goes beyond an economic, forestry or ecological function, it is an essential ecosystem in the peoples' lives while destruction is considered a form of genocide (TinHinan and Infoe, 2011).

29. Parallel event. Intergenerational dialogue: indigenous youth, daughters of Mother Earth. AWID Conference, 2012.



f. The care for the land requires planning and beauty.

The issue of territorial and community planning in the life of Indigenous Peoples communities is a constant, and is part of the care for the territory. Many times, from outside points of view, our communities are considered chaotic, but if we look a little closer we can see that our territories are governed by a planning system based on systems of life and production, on the community, spirituality and a worldview. This planning is associated with the idea of determining places where certain actions are allowed and others not, and those who have different roles in certain areas.

In indigenous Peoples communities, beauty and planning of the “chagra” or “milpa” shows the characteristics of women, since they are responsible for planning, distributing the order of sowing, and the exchange of seeds. “Lazy women do not carry seeds to exchanges, they have a dirty, messy chagra.”³⁰

g. It is linked to the passing on of Traditional Knowledge.

In almost all of the interviews conducted for this study, the strong relationship among culture, traditional knowledge and territories has become clear, as well as the fact that by losing territorial and community spaces, the opportunity to pass on wisdom and traditional knowledge is lost.

In the Tuareg communities, sages’ words (elders) in the communities are a strong lesson and a reference for daily life, which has a great relationship with messages related to the biological diversity of the territories. This is why it is important for this indigenous people to find harmony and balance with their environment (Tin Hinan and INfoe, 2011). And what happens when the ecological system of the territories changes? Tuareg indigenous leaders stated that the loss of these spaces has a strong impact on the passing on of traditional knowledge about the territorial space, due to the change in landscapes and resources necessary for life. The great impact on indigenous cultures is observed because this process of passing on information that occurred naturally to children is interrupted.

In many indigenous cultures, the school of passing on traditional knowledge takes place through the observation and repetition of our elders. For a child, going hunting or fishing in the forest means learning the hunting times of certain species, and knowing their breeding times. Likewise, going with the grandmothers to collect non-timber forest products, shows us which plants work to treat in each condition, or which fruits, mushrooms or insects can enrich our diets. All of this involves processes, stages, cycles and ways of teaching.

Accordingly, women have stressed the importance of involving young people in the processes of passing on of traditional knowledge as part of the protection of culture related to the environmental sustainability of our peoples. That relationship between the environment and traditional knowledge; the indigenous youth are disproportionately affected by the environmental crisis in their territories.

30 CH Interview. June 2018.



h. It is linked to the Indigenous Peoples' worldview.

In the different cultures of indigenous peoples, the worldview is the basis for the construction of interrelations with the environment. This relationship is shaped by the idea of Mother Earth as the basis of the survival of indigenous cultures, which explains the importance of their preservation. In this context, indigenous women are known to be protective and caretakers for the environment and Mother Earth, precisely in that sacred relationship.

Indigenous women have stated that “an essential factor of this dependence is knowing that life revolves around interaction with Mother Earth and that a person is born, works, reproduces and dies on the Earth. The indigenous identity is interdependent of the strong recognition of their roots and ancestors that inhabited that territory.”³¹

31. Apolinaria Santana. Alliance of Indigenous Women from Mexico and Central America.



5. Impacts on Indigenous Women due to the lack of Environmental Justice



a. Lack of legal certainty and responsible governance in Indigenous Territories.

For Indigenous Peoples, the territory is a comprehensive and spatial environment where they live out their lives and where human beings coexist with other living beings, among which the spirits (energy forces) wander and are present in everything, and their peculiar characteristics to that relation with the territory and its natural resources are transmitted. Territoriality, “Mother Earth” gives collective identity and belonging to an Indigenous People. It is considered collective, sacred and cannot be sold nor procured individually. The territory is composed of soil, subsoil, and air space (including rivers, lakes, animals, plants, metals). In the same way, they coincide that the territory is the base to develop the legal, political, economic and social model or system according to their view.

The categorization of the areas for territory use by the community members is the most outstanding aspect in establishing the areas of sustainable management in the long term. The use of resources is regulated by rules created by the community. The regulatory instrument is amended from time to time under the approach of updating territorial management plans. These strategies are implemented through development schemes for communities, that is, not only the resources of flora and fauna must be preserved, but also the needs of economic income for communities must be supplied.

The areas of migratory crops (crop rotation system) belong to the families that have traditionally cultivated them. These are not registered or marked with markers. However, the community acknowledges the family that cultivates it as the owner of each plot, and nobody uses it without that family’s consent, although in some cases it can be for shared use. When an area is modified with plantations of fruit trees or timber trees, it is also considered as property of the family that worked it.

These views on land and territory differ from the classic perception that a territory is reduced to a set of productive resources confined by administrative or proprietary political boundaries. For indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, territoriality reflects the level of appropriation and consolidation between a town and its territory and, especially, it refers to:

- The people’s self-identification with their territory. That identification is mainly by community.
- The coherence between the territory and the community authority, expressed through their own organizational forms, which is the representative organization.
- The collective right to use natural resources in the territory, including the actual degree of control.



Land, territories and natural resources (TTR) have special meanings for indigenous women around the world. They represent the human being's coexistence with Mother Nature or the Pachamama, which is the very life of the earth, water, forests, plants, animals and all the components of habitats and ecosystems. The relationship between indigenous women and the territory is based on being respectful of life, caring for it and feeding it so that it reciprocally cares for and nourishes current generations. There is a connection of responsibility between women, ancestors and future generations. In a few words, it is assumed that the Earth is sacred. Therefore, the human being is a part of Mother Nature and not Mother Nature a part of the human being.

When working with indigenous women, it is observed that they maintain an adherence to the land and the territory because of the importance of their forms of self-organization, identity, belonging to a distinct people, their development of worldview and spirituality (not religion). The land is the basis of the legal, social, economic and political systems of the indigenous peoples that make up the organization and cohesion of their territories in a broad sense. Since it is sacred, the land in the cosmogonic frames is not for sale, it is nonnegotiable and is not to be taken away. The relationship between many indigenous women and the land does not correspond to a capitalist and individualist logic, but to the community in making decisions about its use to ensure well-being, harmony and balance between nature and the community members.

Among other responsibilities, they are ancestral protectors of the TTRs of indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean and around the world, although their role in preserving the environment and human life is often not acknowledged by the international community, Governments and sometimes, some men from their own peoples do not appreciate their work. The president of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues 2011-2012 believes that indigenous women:

“As those who pass on traditional knowledge, we preserve the culture, means of production and ways of organization of our peoples. We contribute to the diversification of productive activities, ensure the functioning of economic institutions of reciprocity and complementarity, and contribute to the collective environmental services of our communities.”

In the face of this role, the dispossession of their TTR affects girls, adult women and indigenous elderly women in a distinct way because of their position within indigenous communities, and because of the intersection of discrimination they face throughout their lives. Currently, the situation of indigenous women is complex. The transformation of the monetary economy, the lack of political recognition, the exercise of violence and ethnocide by the Governments, the depletion of the natural resources of ecosystems, the increase in the prices of arable land and the introduction of extractive activities, mega development projects, and infrastructure construction without the prior, informed and free consent of the indigenous peoples are some factors that have contributed to the erosion of their functions and traditional institutions, although its nature and severity are not the same for all peoples in different regions.

In addition to the dynamic factors in constant implementation within Indigenous Peoples Communities, “women often suffer from marginalization with respect to land ownership and tend



to be more excluded in the decision-making and management related to communal property” (*ibid.*). Likewise, they suffer the effects of dispossession of their TTRs in the form of forced displacement, environmental degradation, food insecurity, health disorders, gender violence and conflicts due to the natural resource scarcity. Despite these challenges, they have taken actions to defend their territories, claimed their peoples’ rights, and they have organized to fight against and change the prevailing systems of discrimination and exclusion so that their human dignity be valued. For these reasons, the current situation requires a careful analysis of the real access of indigenous women to their ancestral TTRs, as well as their participation in the decision-making for the use and access to lands, territories and natural resources.

According to Mairena and Bluhm (2013), it is necessary to define effective actions in territorial governance that include the participation of indigenous women in order to create more balanced and effective management systems within the community of indigenous peoples. As stated by Lastarria -Cornhiel (2011), this can be achieved through the strengthening of grassroots women’s organizations, since the leadership establishing the arrangements for use and access to land and resources of its territory is usually male and women should be provided with tools to be able to negotiate and promote actions that facilitate greater participation in the administration of resources and access to them.

The legal certainty of land implies appropriation of internal governance processes. Without such legal certainty, indigenous peoples’ actions are restricted in the creation and proposal of actions seeking to fight against climate injustice in their territories and communities. Just as legal certainty is the basis of governance processes, they are also a basic source for cultural survival and care for Mother Earth, and without it is more difficult for women to be active participants in defending against the negative changes in their surroundings.

b. Ecological or environmental violence and Indigenous Women.

Indigenous Women have defined ecological or environmental violence as deliberate and lethal exposure to pesticides, mining waste and other sources of toxic pollution.³² In various meetings, they have recognized that there is a relationship between environmental toxic substances and reproductive health, as well as the impacts resulting from environmental violence. Among some negative impacts, they have identified the following:

- The pollution of breast milk, which in some indigenous communities, increases to a level of 4 to 12 times higher than that of the body tissue of the mother;
- High levels of pollutants, such as Persistent Organic Pollutants and heavy metals, in the blood of children’s umbilical cord;
- Disproportionate levels of cancer in the reproductive system, breasts, ovaries, uterus, prostate and testicles, which is also affecting young people;

32. Three international symposia of indigenous women on environmental violence and reproductive health have been held. California (2010); Chickaloon, Alaska (2012); New York, 2018.





- High rates of respiratory ailments such as asthma and obstructive pulmonary disease;
- High levels of leukemia and other types of cancer in babies, children and young people;
- Types of cancer previously unknown and unusual in our communities and present at all ages;
- Degenerative and, in many cases, lethal congenital defects, which are clearly related to environmental toxins, such as nuclear waste, sequelae caused by mining activity and pesticides, and which include, in the most polluted areas, the birth of more and more babies that lack bones (jelly babies);
- Developmental delays, learning difficulties and neurological effects in infants and young children, resulting in permanent sequelae associated with prenatal exposure to mercury, pesticides and other environmental toxins;
- An increase in the number of miscarriages and stillbirths, and
- High levels of sterility and infertility in polluted communities.

In this regard, women suggest that information is hidden or not provided to indigenous communities, even when the effects of chemical substances or the practices to which they are exposed are widely known or well documented by companies, the scientific community and the governments. Indigenous Peoples bear the responsibility of demonstrating the cause of their health problems, and their reports of anecdotal cases are discarded because “they are not verified” or “they lack scientific basis”; meanwhile, sexual and environmental violence continues to be perpetrated under a veil of secrecy and impunity.³³

In this respect, the Special Rapporteur on toxic substances pointed out before the Permanent Forum on indigenous issues in 2017³⁴ what their predecessors had pointed out for decades the impact of pollutants on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, since they are present in the lands, territories and natural resources of the indigenous communities, not because they have made the decisions, but as a result of the abuse and lack of respect for their individual and collective rights. He added that it is a global issue as it occurs in all sociocultural regions and pointed out the effects such as cancer, abortions, congenital defects, learning limitations, diabetes, all linked to the presence of pesticides, toxic chemicals and other environmental problems.

The same Rapporteur expressed that despite the progress on this issue in some countries, the same countries continue manufacturing and exporting these pollutants and export them to poor

33. I International Symposium of Indigenous Women on Environmental Violence and Reproductive Health.

34. Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes.

Seventeenth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

Theme: “Indigenous peoples’ collective rights to land, territories and resources” April 16, 2018, UN Headquarters, New York, New York.



countries with poor systems for handling chemicals, in addition to their shipping by air and water, thus impacting people's health. Among the limitations stand out the following:

- Lack of regulation of pollutants. Among more than 1000 pollutants, less than 30 follow some regulations.
- The children's rights do not include provisions against pollutants.
- The FPIC of indigenous peoples is not acknowledged, despite this right is set forth in the Rotterdam Convention. Although the Governments have the right to "consent," if there is no reply after 90 days, pollutants are transported to them.
- The Convention does not acknowledge the rights to physical integrity, security and self-determination.
- The Convention has no mechanisms for control and transparency.

Against this background, indigenous women spoke up in the III International Symposium on environmental violence and reproductive health against the devastating consequences of pesticides – including those banned in exporting countries – the extraction of uranium and testing of nuclear weapons, incineration of hazardous waste, extraction of gold (small and large scale) with mercury, coal ash dump, military, narcotics and drugs waste, sexual violence perpetrated in association with the extractive industries and the criminalization and repression of women defenders of human and environmental rights.

They also expressed collective outrage at the fact that existing federal and international laws authorize the industrial sector, army and governments to consciously produce, emit, store, transport, export, import and pour hazardous chemicals and radioactive materials, and in turn, to expand their polluting activities, such as the development of fossil fuels, hydraulic fracturing, uranium extraction and crushing, introduction of transgenic seeds, incineration of toxic waste and intensive agriculture in pesticides. They pointed out that indigenous communities and lands have been treated as colonies for the extraction of resources resulting in devastating consequences for intergenerational health, and called for a fair transition from dependence on fossil fuels to sustainable and equitable economies as a fundamental element for environmental health.

Likewise, they called for the cessation of all forms of environmental violence, such as sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking of indigenous women and girls, perpetrated in association with extractive industries, as well as attacks against indigenous defenders of Human and environmental Rights.

c. Violations of Human Rights in the name of conservation.

All Indigenous Peoples maintain strong spiritual ties with plants, trees and animals in their ancestral territories and their sacred duty is to protect them, which is reflected by the overlapping



between the traditional territories of indigenous peoples and the areas where the highest levels of biological diversity are maintained. Traditional indigenous territories, covering around 22% of the planet's surface, coinciding with where 80% of the world's biological diversity is found.

The term "protected area" means a special area of conservation, adopting different conservation zones such as national parks and forests, wild flora and fauna shelters, marine zones, private reserves and reserves administered by non-governmental organizations, Indigenous Peoples' protected areas, community lands and other areas where nature protection and practice of sustainable subsistence promote the safety of the ecosystems.³⁵

There are two approaches on the subject of protected areas: one is focused on the conservation of a space where there is a gap between the population and access to resources, where persons are seen as visitors who do not stay in these areas (Oilwatch and World Rainforest Movement, 2014); while the other one integrates the importance of including social sectors in the conservation processes of protected areas considering that governance through local and community institutions provides spaces for greater access control and use of natural resources because the central governments rarely have enough strength and control in these areas geographically distant from the administration centers (Kaimowitz, Fauné and Mendoza, 2003).

Even so, countless definitions of protected areas have been given without the participation of local complainants, and specifically in territories that have been traditionally owned by indigenous peoples. The justification is that protected areas offer the possibility of safeguarding biological diversity for all of humanity's benefit; however, in many parts of the world they have also been associated with violations of the indigenous peoples' Human Rights. These factors include:

- In the name of conservation, all human presence has been eliminated in the protected areas. As a result, indigenous peoples have been destroyed due to the displacement of their ancestral lands and the loss of cultural values in different ways and means;
- Authorization for extraction of ore, oil and gas, logging, hydroelectric dams' construction, among other forms of appropriation, without consulting with the community beforehand;
- Generalized perception that protected areas are uninhabited, unused;

In many countries, indigenous peoples continue dealing with the legacy of these Human Rights violations, such as land expropriation, forced displacement, limited exercise of autonomy and self-government, no access to means of subsistence, restricted access to sacred sites, loss of culture, lack of recognition of their own authorities and denied access to redress, including restitution and compensation.

35. A/71/229 (2016) Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz.





The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, stated that the main justification of some Governments and conservation organizations is that only indigenous peoples exploit natural resources and this is an impediment to conservation. She adds that these arguments do not recognize the complexity of ecological and social relationships of many indigenous peoples in relation to their ecosystems and their right to own, use and control their territories, lands and resources. She also points out that they ignore many studies show that the territories of the Indigenous Peoples to whom their right has been acknowledged are better preserved than other lands. She adds that indigenous peoples argue that they value nature more than others because it is the basis of their survival as distinct peoples and cultures, of their traditional foods and traditional knowledge systems. She concludes that evidence shows most of the best-preserved areas are in indigenous territories.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, indigenous peoples have mobilized and begun to demand their territorial rights supported by the new international legal regulations that promoted them. Protected areas in countries that have not established legal reforms or acknowledged the collective territorial rights of indigenous peoples have been infringed by an extremely high and persistent incidence of violations of the indigenous peoples' Human Rights. In addition, the results of conservation initiatives in countries where indigenous peoples remain marginalized have been the least sustainable and satisfactory, leading to scrutiny of international conservation policies. Despite the gradual adoption of a Human Rights-based approach to conservation, there are still considerable barriers to apply it effectively.

d. Violations of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty.

The food systems of Indigenous Peoples are deeply linked to ancestral relations with their territories, their own rules, lifestyles, identity, culture and spirituality. Women and men play a decisive role in the care for nature and develop, from early age, skills to use plants and other elements in order to produce food, medicine and spiritual activities. It has ensured the continuity of their food systems and their means of production, despite adversity, accumulating traditional knowledge, experiences, demonstrating abilities for adaptation and resilience (ability of Indigenous Peoples to adapt to the effects resulting from environmental injustice).

Their traditional foods (their own cuisine) are passed down among generations through songs, legends, their languages and examples. Their worldviews are expressed through spiritual, cultural, social and productive practices involving the nawales or energies of the moon, the stars, human beings, which explains the logic of productive diversification, reducing the risk of losses, bad seasons and guaranteeing food security. Throughout the food production cycle, they practice values such as reciprocity, duality and complementarity, strengthening their own economic institutions, as expressed by indigenous women:



“Traditional foods are at high risk of disappearing, so we must ensure the provision of seeds we can reproduce and use as food. We must teach our children to safeguard food, and save gastronomic knowledge, thus strengthening their sense of belonging. We must not stop enjoying the traditional knowledge passed down by the grandmothers, their recipes...”³⁶

The status of indigenous nutrition is determined by factors linked to the changing living conditions of communities, such as environmental degradation, pollution of their traditional ecosystems, loss of their lands and territories and reduction of their traditional food sources or their access to them; migration and growing urbanization. The effect has resulted in nutritional issues such as chronic malnutrition, risk of malnutrition and obesity, among others, a devastating consequence and effect in the promotion and consumption of transgenic foods.

The interviewees pointed out that the major factor of poor nutrition among indigenous peoples is the loss of control over their ancestral territories, restricting their access to healthy food through their traditional activities such as agriculture, species gathering, fishing and exchange. Among the barriers preventing the nutrition condition from improving, the following have been identified:

- a) the loss of traditional forms of production;
- b) low production yield;
- c) Impact of development models and use of resources;
- d) effects of natural disasters;
- e) ownership and security of the collective natural heritage (land, territory, natural resources, traditional knowledge).

The collective dimension of the indigenous peoples' right to food is expressed in ILO³⁷ Convention No. 169, which acknowledged the right of Indigenous Peoples to traditional and subsistence activities, to participation in the use, administration and conservation of the natural resources existing on their lands, and the need to encourage and strengthen handicraft activities, rural and community industries and traditional activities related to the subsistence economy of the peoples concerned, such as hunting, fishing, hunting with traps and collecting, as important factors in the maintenance of their culture and self-reliance and socio-economic development.

The Right to Food is ratified in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which acknowledges the right to maintain and develop the political, economic and social systems or institutions of indigenous peoples, to safely enjoy their own means of subsistence and

36. Indigenous Women Focus Group. Universidad Carlos III. June 2018.

37. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/publication/wcms_100910.pdf. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/publication/wcms_100910.pdf.





development, and to freely engage themselves in all of their traditional economic activities and other types of activities.³⁸

The aforesaid agrees with the planning of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Jean Ziegler, who points out that the right to food includes access to resources and means to ensure and produce their own subsistence: access to land, property security; access to water, seeds, credits, technologies and local and regional markets, including vulnerable and discriminated groups; access to traditional fishing areas for fishing communities that depend on fishing for their subsistence; access to sufficient income to ensure a decent life, including rural and industrial workers, and access to social security and assistance for those who suffer more hardships.³⁹ Indigenous women stated that Environmental Justice is equivalent to creating conditions for food sovereignty:

“For Nahuatl women, Environmental Justice is equivalent to achieving food sovereignty, that is, enjoying the right to food. To do this, women safeguard the seeds, and prepare traditional indigenous foods. It is important to produce our own food, especially in a globalized world where the ability to do so has been lost, threatening the richness of the cuisine.”⁴⁰

Among the recommendations on indigenous issues given by the Permanent Forum in the UN⁴¹, it has been affirmed that the right of indigenous peoples to food and food sovereignty is inextricably linked to the collective recognition of land rights and territories and resources, culture, values and social organization. It also reaffirms that subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, traditional grazing practices, shifting cultivation, small scale subsistence farming and gathering are essential not only for the exercise of the right to food, but also for the care for cultures, languages, social life and identity of Indigenous Peoples.

The Forum pointed out that the displacement, development of resources such as mining, monoculture, natural disasters and other activities have an impact on food sovereignty. It argues that although hunger and malnutrition levels in indigenous peoples are often disproportionately greater than those of the non-indigenous population, they often do not benefit from the programs developed to fight against hunger and malnutrition or promote development. In this context, he encouraged the Governments to take measures in order to enhance the ability of indigenous peoples to strengthen their traditional feeding systems.

In various places it has been pointed out that the main problems which Indigenous Peoples deal with for the building up of a sovereign Latin America and the Caribbean and with social, environmental and gender justice are the concentration of wealth and political, economic and

38. http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_es.pdf.

39. <https://www.cetim.ch/legacy/es/documents/bro1-alim-A4-es.pdf>.

40. Indigenous Women Focus Group. Universidad Carlos III. June, 2018.

41. United Nations. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Report on the eleventh session (May 7 to 18, 2012). The Economic and Social Council Official Records, 2012. Supplement No. 23 E/2012/43 E/C.19/2012/13.



communication power in a few hands; the hegemonic system of food production, marketing and consumption; the violation of Human Rights; the unsustainable and destructive use of Water, Land and Territories and their severe environmental and social impacts and their threats to the peoples' biocultural heritage; the increasing criminalization and violence as instruments to hold back social protest; the high overweight and obesity rates affecting people's health and increase in public expenditures on health; the absence of relevant participation of social organizations and movements throughout the public policy cycle; and the lack of public policies promoting and ensuring sustainable production and access to healthy foods, ⁴² specifically impacting indigenous peoples.

It was suggested that it would be necessary to change the paradigms of agro-business, free trade, large-scale production, commodification of food, agro-fuels, large-scale fishing, and to construct a new paradigm based on Food Sovereignty and agro-ecological production in the exercise and respect of the Human Right to Food, as expressed by indigenous women:

“The food of the future does not depend on the multinational companies, it depends on us, guardians of the traditional knowledge. It is not about innovating, but recovering the grandmothers' wisdom and knowledge, making use of what is close to them. Foods have a history and flavor that connect us with our ancestors. An important aspect is the transgenerational connection through food.”⁴³

Indigenous Peoples pointed out that food sovereignty is a precondition of food security⁴⁴, which is defined as “the right of peoples to nutritious and culturally adequate, accessible food, produced in a sustainable and ecological way, and their right to choose their own food and productive system. It places those who produce, distribute and consume food at the core of food systems and policies, above the demands of markets and companies.”⁴⁵

In this context, it was suggested that for Environmental Justice and food sovereignty, a local, family and indigenous agriculture and artisanal fishing must be promoted with the diversity of productive systems based on fair gender relations and the enormous wealth of traditional knowledge and ancestral practices put into effect mainly by women, accumulated by generations, ensuring food production and the people's sustainable well-being and biodiversity.

42. Alliance for the food sovereignty of the peoples, DEMARACHU DECLARATION.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONSULTATION OF PEOPLES, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND NGOs ON FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PRIOR TO THE 35TH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE. Comarca Guna Yala, from January 31 to February 3, 2018.

43. Indigenous Women Focus Group. Universidad Carlos III. June 2018.

44. The Declaration of Atitlán, 2002.

45. The Declaration of Nyeléni. Documents on social movements, 2007.



e. **Criminalization of the Environmental Justice fight.**

As previously stated, the interests in indigenous territories are diverse, related to natural resources and have a strong impact on the legal certainty of indigenous territories. Once the collective rights of peoples are affected, it particularly affects indigenous women on a larger scale, undermining the security of access to certain areas of the ecosystems where they live, thus having an impact on livelihoods.

At the global level, struggles for natural resources replicate and intensify the social inequalities in which indigenous peoples live. Facing the search for the defense of environmental rights and Environmental Justice, indigenous peoples have demonstrated and protested so that the rights gained are not undermined in the face of external interests in their territories. In Latin America, we have seen different cases in which the defense of the indigenous peoples' territory and resources has resulted in the criminalization of these defenders of rights.

The former Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, had already stated that there is an unequal application of justice having an impact on diligence in the complaints filed by Human Rights defenders. However, those crimes for which these defenders are accused are efficiently investigated and processed by the bodies of justice.⁴⁶ Likewise, in his 2011 report on extractive industries, he stated that "there is a strong feeling that natural resource extraction projects and other large development projects carried out in or near indigenous territories are the major source of abuses against the Rights of Indigenous Peoples throughout the world (James Anaya, 2011, Para 82, cited in Murcia and Puyano, 2016).

In different places on the global level, indigenous women have argued that extractive industries have a great negative impact on indigenous peoples in their different areas, in terms of impacts on health, traditional knowledge, cultural fabric, biodiversity and ecological balance in their territories. Most of these impacts are aggravated for indigenous women. Throughout the world, there is a strong indigenous female leadership in environmental struggles. In Latin America we find, among others, the fighting experiences by Berta Cáceres in Honduras, Aida Quilcué in Peru, Joan Carling in the Philippines, Adolphine Muley in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and many other indigenous women leaders who fight for the environmental and cultural defense of their territories.

For example, the case of the Aymara people in Peru that in 2011 began to reject the Santa Ana mine activities (open-pit mining). When the community became aware of the potential pollution in water sources in the region, the protests began, seeking the repeal of supreme decree 083-2007 which declared the Santa Ana mine a national priority. As a result of these mobilizations, the prosecutor's office began the investigation of 100 leaders involved in the mobilizations, accusing them of hindering the functions of public services, riots and aggravated extortion. In

46. James Anaya, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people. "Preliminary observations on his visit to Guatemala, June 13 to 18, 2010." Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10173&LangID=S>



Peru, the charge of aggravated extortion is used against organized crime and is more frequent in social protests (McDonagh and Orellana, 2018).

The criminalization of indigenous rights defenders and leaders seems to be an action Governments around the world are promoting, to the detriment of Human Rights, giving preference to national economic interests. According to Amnesty International, Latin America is the most violent region in order to engage in the defense of Human Rights. In Chile, cases against indigenous Mapuches are observed, specifically the case against Machi Francisca, where charges for crimes are made based on untrustworthy testimonies. The fact that she has been brought before courts three times in connection with the horrific crime of the Luchsinger-MacKay couple, being already acquitted on two occasions, not only calls into question the discriminatory way in which justice is applied against leaders of indigenous peoples, but also violates the rights to truth, justice and compensation for victims of crime and their families (Amnesty International, 2018).

We have to think that there is an intrinsic relationship between the context of defending rights and criminalization of indigenous leaders. In cases such as that from Colombia, it is said there is a shame map that refers to the mapping of social leaders' murders, so far this year there have been 123 murders, which are related to conflicts for lands, territories and natural resources, representing 83% of murders in 2018, 15.12% of those being murders of women (Radio W, 2018).

In the United States, we have seen one of the most followed cases in the media, the defense of the territory by the indigenous peoples of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe before the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline. These people suffered violence and harassment for defending their territory. Cases like these are multiplying in an extreme and quick way around the world, as defined by Victoria Tauli – Corpuz: “the situation of indigenous Human Rights defenders is not good these days” (EFEUSA, 2017).

The defense of indigenous territories against external interests, mining, hydroelectric projects, protected areas, development projects carried out without the communities' consent is increasing every day, and the participation of indigenous women in this defense has been active and as a result they have been subject to violence and criminalization. Even the current Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has been subject to such criminalization, when the Philippine government criminalized a number of people and organizations defending rights on charges of “terrorism.” According to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, there are numerous cases where the country's policies are used to criminalize activists and outlaw the organizations for which they work.

In countries like Colombia, the criminalization of rights defenders is alarming. According to information presented by Feliciano Valencia, senator of the MAIS Party, so far this year 32 indigenous leaders have been murdered and 207 threats to leaders and ancestral authorities have been reported, as well as 13 complaints of forced recruitment (Contagio Radio, 2018).



The case of Berta Cáceres, indigenous Lenca leader, highlights the role and consequence of indigenous women in the defense of their territories. On March 3, 2016, she was murdered in her home by attackers, who were later arrested and are now on trial. Cáceres had worked in favor of the rights of the Lenca people and their territories for more than twenty years. According to information provided by the Honduras Public Prosecutor's Office, two of the persons arrested are linked to Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA), the Honduran company that was building the Agua Zarca dam, to which Berta and COPINH —her organization— were strongly opposed. The defender successfully promoted a campaign against the hydroelectric project, which had been initiated its operations without being adequately consulted or having obtained the consent of the local indigenous communities (Front Line Defenders, S.A.).

The criminalization in the defense of indigenous lands and territories is increasing, and is worrisome all throughout the world. According to many cases, this defense is related to the environmental degradation of the indigenous territories, and as this degradation or environmental injustice has already been considered, it has serious consequences in the preservation and transmission of the indigenous culture.

f. Climate Change and Climate Justice.

Sometimes, there is confusion between Environmental Justice and climate justice. According to Kimaren Ole-Riamit⁴⁷, Masai Indian from Kenya, Environmental Justice is a broader concept as it includes a series of elements involving aspects such as law, health, and the search for eradication of those inequalities, while climate justice is a more recent discussion related to aspects of climate change and its current impacts on humanity. However, in both cases it is important not to lose track of the fact that indigenous peoples are the most disadvantaged ones as the extreme natural phenomena have an impact on them.

According to the UN, women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die during a catastrophe. Therefore, they are particularly vulnerable to climate change and have a disproportionate impact on life, since it affects access to water, food and other materials for family, or the care of other people, in addition to other injustices experienced by women and girls, such as gender-based violence and lack of access to information (Ghorbani, 2015). It is an unbalanced impact on indigenous peoples and women, since they have contributed the least to climate change.

According to Censat Agua Viva (2016, cited in Ulloa, 2016), Indigenous Peoples demand the recognition of their ways of thinking and their knowledge about the environment and climate processes, as a proposal for Climate-Environmental Justice. Within this background, indigenous women highlight the differentiated effects of climate change and demand climate justice so that their rights —also differentiated—are acknowledged. As per Colombia, indigenous peoples demand their rights against extractive processes and that they be recognized as environmental authorities to make decisions within their territories; while indigenous women state that women's role must be acknowledged, and equity in access to land tenure must be ensured as well as the

47. Interview in September 2018.



equal and differentiated participation of women in the different decision-making spaces, public policies and strategies, plans and projects of adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

As stated by Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, a Chadian Indigenous: “the idea that gender is a cross-cutting issue does not exist in the United Nations. Women should be actively participating in negotiations, even beyond specific groups” (Ghordani, 2015).

According to Ulloa (2016), in discussions held in Latin America on climate justice, indigenous women suggest their perspectives that include human and non-human issues, evidencing the diverse coordination between economic, extractive and environmental changes supported by unequal power relations, arguing that the demands of environmental and climatic justice mobilize territorial and environmental struggles, facing global policies affecting autonomy and self-determination and reveal the conflicts in such coordination, but at the same time it is a space where achieving the creation of more inclusive environmental and climate policies from cultural perspectives is possible.



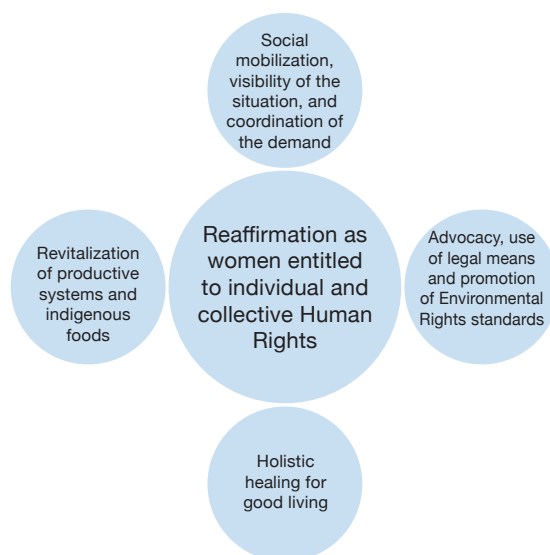
6. Main strategies and practices promoted by Indigenous Women to achieve Environmental Justice

The evidence of practices and strategies carried out by indigenous women in different areas to fight in favor of Environmental Justice are linked to the process of restitution and acknowledgement of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and through them seeking their acknowledgement as subjects of rights individual and collective human beings. As stated by the IWF/FIMI, in the report on violence against indigenous women in 2006, Mairin Iwanka Raya,⁴⁸ the strategies of indigenous women have sought to fight from the intersection of three movements: Human Rights, indigenous people's rights, and women's rights. In the same report, they argued that collective rights were fundamental for confronting violations in the framework of Human Rights and progress respect to the acknowledgement of women's rights.

The practices and strategies have aimed at reaffirming indigenous women as subjects of collective rights, that is, women belonging to indigenous peoples, bearers of the right to environmental resources from their own diversities and specificities, with a universal approach to Human Rights, in which the individual Human Rights they have as individuals are complemented with the collective Human Rights to which they have access because they are members of a people with identity.

Rights that should be exercised through the application of self-development, self-determination models for each one of their peoples, in duality, complementarity, reciprocity and establishing synergies and alliances with other complainants.

Outline that summarizes practices and strategies used by indigenous women for Environmental Justice.



48. FIMI. Mairin Iwanka Raya. Indigenous women stand against violence. A companion report to the UN Secretary's General study on violence against women. 2006.



For Indigenous Women, the protection and defense of their peoples' territories and natural resources have been a constant throughout the history of the conquest, colonization and invasion, as well as in the later stages of the incorporation of Governments and at present. Many ancestral ceremonies, as well as the traditional knowledge and cultural practices passed on throughout generations are testimonies. The reason for pursuing Environmental Justice is still valid and, in some cases, has even increased, as indicated by these interviewed indigenous women:

"... sometimes I really cannot understand, why do we claim so many rights to exist as human beings, but we are not being rational, because if we first do not demand the right to the so-called Environmental Justice, then no other right is important because we will not exist. First, we have to demand and prioritize Environmental Justice because nature gathers all the value for indigenous peoples, including spiritual value and so many things that we take into consideration when describing nature. It is part of our life; it is what gives us life. If we go against the rights of nature, what will it serve us for if we do not live to enjoy those rights?"⁴⁹

For indigenous women, Environmental Justice refers to the intimate relationship between human beings and nature, and all people's commitments to ensure this respectful relationship.

"... I always say and ask myself all of these questions: What good is it for me to have money? What good is it for me to have so many rights if I am not going to have clean air, or a land where I can enjoy my rights? That's why I believe that nature and human beings go hand in hand, together. Just as we protect and promote respect for the human being's right, we must also protect and promote the right of nature."⁵⁰

The impact of colonization has created a chain of rights violations that are expressed in women's bodies and spread to the environment, and have reproduced intergenerational traumas terribly affecting entire communities.

"Violence against women and violence against Mother Earth are directly connected. In the seed ceremonies of Haudenosaunee they recognize that women are the seed, the connection between the Creator and Mother Earth. The loss of the connection between indigenous women and their lands and territories means that the vital blood and the bearer of future generations are also isolated. Since the existence of the Patriarchal Indigenous Law, disappeared indigenous women were forcibly displaced from their traditional territories for "getting married." This was the beginning of the disappeared indigenous women. The genocidal policies of the Indigenous Law also had an impact on indigenous governance systems, where the decision-making abilities of women were silenced and no longer part of the balance of those systems. We already know what residential schools did with our families, including the roles of mothers and fathers, the

49 Focus Group with Indigenous Women LAC. June 2018.

50 Focus Group with Indigenous Women LAC. June 2018.



loss of family ties, and the loss of the most basic principles of a relationship: love and emotional well-being.”⁵¹

The same author points out that in order to break these cycles of violence it is necessary to move towards a true decolonization, understanding that the responsibilities determined for each person and people should be assumed, reaffirming again the need to build respectful relationships for all men and women, with the wellbeing of future generations being our guiding star.

“Decolonization means recovering security and living in a society where we can feel safe and respect each other as people. It means that our men are retaking their legitimate responsibilities to be the Warriors of our nations in order to protect women and children, and the lands to which they are connected, to protect the lands for future generations. It means that our women are retaking their legitimate responsibilities to be respected in decision-making, to take and care for life and to bring future generations to this physical world. It is the responsibility of all generations (mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandparents) to ensure that we maintain those connections with our lands and territories, with our strong and intact languages and ceremonies.”⁵²

However, indigenous women’s approaches not only cover their own spaces and interests, but also transcend to other people and communities, including the business industry.

“... without nature we would not be anything because we, the ones who sow, live directly on the countryside, and also people from the city as the bread they eat comes from wheat, from the sower’s hands. For that reason, it is not only important to conserve nature, but also to give it a right or to force ourselves to take care of it, because if it is the way where we go, it is right of being our life. If there is nowhere to sow wheat for bread, then nobody exists for Bimbo.”⁵³

For indigenous women, Environmental Justice is necessarily linked to the right to territory, since for indigenous peoples the territory is the spatial field where their people’s lives take place, where human beings coexist with other living beings, among which there are plants, animals, stones, and with the nawales or energies in which are all things are present and set forth their peculiar characteristics.

The collective identity and belonging of an indigenous people’s members are determined by territoriality, by “Mother Earth,” which is considered collective, sacred, and cannot be sold nor individually procured. The territory is composed of soil, subsoil and air space (rivers, lakes, animals, plants, metals). In the territory, the legal, political, economic and social system or model of each indigenous people is developed. Therefore, from the perspective of indigenous women, it is not possible to separate the environment protection and defense from the struggle for the territory.

51. Jacobs, Beverley. Decolonizing the Violence Against Indigenous Women. February 2013.

52. Idem.

53. Focus Group with Indigenous Women LAC. June 2018.



“Environmental justice means to value the earth. How can we separate it if it is our life? Without the air, we could not live because if we really think a bit, for us it is like they want to put an end to our lives. For example, in Ecuador we have been earnestly resisting the oil workers. We have cried. How many women have shed tears so that there are no concessions to the mining companies and the oil companies! We have defended with all our strength, because it is life itself, it is our life.”⁵⁴

This vision of indigenous territory has been subject matter of jurisprudence of the Inter-American Human Rights System, since the IACHR acknowledges that the following are associated with the right to territory: a) the right to boundary and entitlement: carrying out a self-identification process of the territory boundaries and provision of the entitlement process to obtain a legal document that legally guarantees the rights to delimited lands; b) the right to property, that is, to be acknowledged as owners of their lands; and, c) the right to restitution, indemnity and compensation, since in the event of displacements, or unauthorized use of their lands by the indigenous peoples, the Governments should establish mechanisms to return, equalize losses or pay economic compensation to solve the resulting damages.⁵⁵

As can be seen, the conception and practice of the struggle for Environmental Justice by indigenous women is complex, multidimensional and collective, and it engages the entire community including men; which makes it difficult to locate certain practices or experiences identified under a single strategy. However, for the purposes of the study, efforts have been made to organize the discussion based on four basic strategies interrelated and complemented with each other, namely:

- Social mobilization, visibility of the situation, and coordination of the demand,
- Holistic healing for good living,
- Revitalization of productive systems and indigenous foods,
- Advocacy, use of legal means and promotion of Environmental Rights standards.

For each of them, the main practices have been identified from the analyzed experiences.

No.	Main strategies	Main practices
1	Social mobilization, visibility of the situation, and coordination of the demand.	Creation and/or strengthening of their own organizations in order present the demand.
		Visibility of female defenders and processes led by indigenous women.

54. Focus Group with Indigenous Women LAC. June 2018.

55. CEPAL. The indigenous peoples in Latin America. Progress in the last decade and pending challenges for the guarantee of their rights. 2014.



		Raising awareness of mixed indigenous organizations and coordination with indigenous governance structures.
		Coordination with networks and processes.
		Building alliances and synergies.
		Learning and training.
2.	Promote and practice healing for good living.	
3.	Revitalization of productive systems and indigenous foods.	Linking the indigenous worldview to productive systems and traditional foods.
		Visibility and valuing of indigenous knowledge in productive practices and traditional foods.
		Their own initiatives in applying the productive diversification and protection of native seeds.
		Adding value to traditional products: processing and searching for a fair market.
4.	Advocacy, use of legal means and promotion of Environmental Rights standards.	
		Documenting cases.
		Advocacy at different levels.
		Communication and raising awareness.

Below, there is a summary of the main characteristics of each strategy, including some experiences and practices for each one of them.

6.1. Social mobilization, visibility of the situation, and coordination of the demand.

One of the first strategies promoted by indigenous women has been precisely to organize themselves in order to express and shed light on the problems they are dealing with, as a result of the lack of Environmental Justice, in their communities and in other areas. The component of the linkage between individual and collective identity has been at the center, since although they express the impact on their lives, even because they are criminalized, their demands reflect the impact on the community and collectivity, being aware of not only a specific physical space, but also a space inhabited by the ancestors and the next generations. Therefore, decisions about “the environment” have an impact on all people and generations alike.



The practices and experiences identified under this strategy have been the following:

- Creation and/or strengthening of indigenous women's organizations in order to participate in the responsible governance of indigenous territory and control of natural resources.⁵⁶ To achieve this, they have coordinated networks, raised mixed organizations' awareness, involved traditional authorities and organized training and learning processes of capacities.
- Organizing themselves as women in order to present demands for territorial rights.
- Strengthening the organization and coordinating among indigenous women to participate in territorial governance.

a. Creation and / or strengthening of indigenous women's organizations in order to participate in the responsible governance of indigenous territory and control of natural resources⁵⁷ and social mobilization in order to present their demands for Environmental Justice.

As previously stated, achieving Environmental Justice for Indigenous Peoples and for Indigenous Women depends on legal certainty and the responsible governance of ancestral collective territories. The territories are the basis of their identities, cultures, economies and traditions. The right to territory is substantially linked to the right to self-determination through the autonomy or self-government systems of each indigenous people, based on collective ownership and the right to control, develop and use their respective natural resources. These rights are incorporated into the regulations of each people and the internationally agreed Human Rights standards. For Indigenous Women, the systematic violation of collective rights as Indigenous Peoples is the factor of greatest environmental injustice; therefore, the strategies are based on the defense of the collective rights of their peoples.

b. Organizing themselves as women in order to present demands for territorial rights.

In order to raise awareness among members of their communities and other complainants, women have promoted several ways of organizing; for example, the women in Samburu Women Trust, pastoralist women in Kenya (Laikipia, Isiolo, Marsabit and Samburu counties), who have organized themselves to increase their abilities to influence public policies and decision-making processes. Since 2006, they have organized themselves because they are aware of the family and

56. The responsible governance of ownership (FAO, 2012).

- The governance of ownership can be considered responsible when it is fair and equitable and seeks to offer the greatest possible benefit to the majority of people, while minimizing the negative repercussions for individuals or groups;
- It takes into account the principle of sustainability;
- It is in line with international human rights.

57. The responsible governance of ownership (FAO, 2012). The governance of ownership can be considered responsible when it is fair and equitable and seeks to offer the greatest possible benefit to the majority of people, minimizing at the same time the negative repercussions for individuals or groups; when it takes into account the principle of sustainability; and it is in line with international human rights.



community norms passed on among generations, which did not include the acknowledgement and women's ownership over the lands, nor did they have possibilities to participate in the decision-making about natural resources and territory. In spite of constitutional changes in national legislation, only adult and elderly men participated in the discussions of decentralized government bodies, marginalizing women⁵⁸. This situation not only had an impact on them due to harmful community practices, but also on the territories, lifestyles, cultural and environmental identity of their communities. They were concerned about the discrimination suffered by women in terms of their territorial rights and other natural resources.

Jointly with the IIWF-AYNI, they have begun to influence different organizations, from the national to the local level, including the elderly who are traditional custodians of community norms. They have promoted harmonizing these norms with women's rights through the creation of spaces for dialogue, intersectoral forums, women's national conferences to support their work aimed at defending their territories, address climate change impacts and build a community of "champions," thus adding to women's abilities and leadership.⁵⁹

c. Strengthening the organization and coordinating among indigenous women to participate in territorial governance.

The worldview about land and territory among Indigenous Peoples, and specifically indigenous women, differs from the classical perception that usually reduces a territory to a set of productive resources confined by administrative or property political boundaries. For them, territoriality reflects the level of appropriation and consolidation between one people and its territory, and refers especially to: a) the self-identification of the people or community with its territory; b) the coherence between territory and community authority, expressed through the structures of ancestral governance, which are the representative organization; and, c) the collective right to use natural resources in the territory, including the actual degree of control they maintain or acquire as a community. This view is translated into the defense of the territory before a development model seeking to change the ways of use and production.

A case related to this issue is observed with the initiative of the Sumu-Mayangna indigenous people (Nicaragua), who have been working to strengthen their organization and coordination in order to improve their participation in territorial governance.

For the Sumu-Mayangna people, the territory is the place where human beings live in harmony with nature and spiritual beings (nahuales or energies), within the framework of self-government. For them, **Disang** is the Mother Earth who sustains life with its riches: forests, mountains, rivers and all that is part of biodiversity. The **Biri Biri** is the practice of solidarity, equity, reciprocity allowing everyone to enjoy these riches. A community that practices the Biri Biri system is a prosperous community both in the generation of material wealth and in the spiritual aspect. This system has to do with the gifts (mission of each person), morality, love of neighbor, survival and

58. FIMI- AYNI. According to the studies done by SWT in 2015/2016 on 'The unspoken voice' and 'Indigenous women and the LAPSSSET Corridor,' mentioned by SWT.

59. FIMI- AYNI.





food security. It is part of the people's daily life. In this context, money is not important to be happy or satisfied, but it depends on sharing with your neighbor to the best of your abilities. Life in balance and harmony is only possible if nature is respected.

For the territorial management organization, each community has “ecological rules for the management of indigenous territory,” whose areas are identified as follows:

- Agricultural use
- Güiriseria or artisanal washing of gold
- Frequent hunting and gathering
- History and culture
- Hunting and sporadic collection
- Reproduction of plants and animals

As a result of the process of autonomy and acknowledgement of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Nicaragua, the Sumu-Mayangna communities own 9 territories with title deed and under the management of Indigenous Territorial Governments (GTI), all members of the structure of the Mayangna Nation. As part of the processes to improve territorial governance and participation of indigenous women, these 9 indigenous territories held the first Mayangna Women's Forum in June 2015. This forum aimed at strengthening its territorial organization and coordination as a nation, and revitalize its territorial organization and be linked as a Nation, revitalizing their traditional lifestyles and productive systems.

In this forum, commitments on food sovereignty and security, handicrafts processing, joint management and protection of protected areas, adaptation measures to climate change, protection of soil and water sources, women's participation in market activities, the role of women in the protection of forests and traditional (ancestral) knowledge in production were made ⁶⁰.

d. Organization of women to protect the community's natural resources.

The issue of women's participation within territorial governance structures is an important aspect so that they can organize themselves in an integral way in the defense of the resources of their territories.

Women's community organizations have emerged from initiatives linked to the need to protect community natural resources, such as the Torang organization in Kotari, in the State of Jharkhand, in eastern India. In that case, an activist, Suryamani Bhagat, was able to promote the struggle for Environmental Justice in a deeply patriarchal society. She is a member of the Jharkhand forest ranger movement, and has been able to mobilize the community to protect forest resources.

60. Source: Prepared by the authors based on: UNESCO. Sumu-Mayangna cultural notebook. 2012. Memory of the First Forum of Women of the Sumu-Mayangna Nation. Women producers free of violence ... construction companies of the Sumu-Mayangna Nation. Rosita, North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region. Nicaragua. June 2015. <https://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/368933-mujeres-mayangnas-luchan-mas-espacios/>.



Among the activities they have undertaken is to occupy the forests, taking advantage of the 2006 Indian Forest Act, which provides a legal basis for the possession of lands that they have owned through generations, without the need for formal recognition. What the community members have done is to start delimiting the area and planting fruit trees and other vegetation in them, while awaiting a response from the Government based on their legal demands. They have also planted medicinal plants and other plants to enhance biodiversity, and have prohibited the sowing of eucalyptus or acacia because of their negative effects on soil, water and the rest of forest ecosystem. Women have also organized themselves to prevent deforestation, patrolling the forest in order to protect it.

The members of this movement have also been able to participate in regional events such as the Women and Climate Summit held in Bali, Indonesia in 2014. They have dealt with a lot of discrimination and threats from the authorities. Bhagat has stated that forest conservation and the impact of climate change is closely linked to gender relations, especially because the forest provides important resources for the protection of families.⁶¹

e. Supporting the recovery and/or strengthening of Traditional Institutions of territorial governance.

The special relationships between indigenous women and the territory and environment are part of socio-political institutions, types of governance, individual and collective Human Rights and traditional knowledge systems linked to ancestral productive practices. Therefore, other initiatives are indeed seeking to develop the women's capacities to carry out these functions and participate effectively in governance structures.

In this context, there are other experiences in which indigenous women strengthen their organizations to increase their capacities to participate and influence authorities; as for example, fisherwomen who established their organization for community development (OCD) in the district of Kanyakumari in India in 1975 and they registered it in 1996. It is a district with 1,870,374 inhabitants, with a sex ratio of 1000: 1019 and a 91.75% illiteracy rate located in a rainy area. Its main productive activity is fishing. The organization works with fisherwomen descended from families historically linked to fishing activities, but who are not acknowledged, do not enjoy their rights or positions of political participation; on the contrary, they are exploited by intermediaries, barely supported as indigenous people and discriminated against by male caste fishermen.⁶²

With the support of the IIWF-AYNI fund, the group has initiated a process of empowerment through organizational strengthening, increase in knowledge and exercise of labor and gender rights, as well as the search for measures to add value to its products, provide with facilities for storage, transport and market to improve their conditions and move towards sustainability and that of their families. They also intend to increase their knowledge and skills in order to

61. Thin Lei Win, Thomson Reuters Foundation. August 20, 2014.

62. Organization for Community Development.



influence government, customary and parliamentary⁶³ authorities so as to promote favorable public policies.⁶⁴

f. Raising awareness of mixed Indigenous Organizations in order to ensure participation of women in environmental management.

Among other practices promoted by indigenous women to achieve greater participation in the environmental management of their territories, this includes raising awareness of mixed indigenous organizations of which they are a part. For many years, indigenous women of the Amazonian peoples made a series of demands to be part of the COICA management.⁶⁵ The COICA is an international indigenous organization that defends, protects, and seeks to provide security to indigenous territories within the framework of respect for their lifestyle, social, spiritual and cultural principles and values. It brings together national indigenous organizations from nine countries sharing the Amazon basin: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, French Guiana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela.

In 2017, they held the First Congress of Andean and Indigenous Amazonian Women in Peru, where they analyzed women's rights and took steps to promote gender equity policies for the COICA. On June 18, 2018, in the city of Macapá, State of Amapá in Brazil, they held the II Congress of Indigenous Amazonian Women of the COICA, where they reaffirmed their proposals for the defense of their rights and territories. They set out the following objectives: to shed light on the importance of women in the struggle for the respect of territorial rights and Human Rights of the Amazonian peoples, to identify ways to participate in decision-making and to influence national, regional and international areas.⁶⁶ Almost one decade of impact later, the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) decided to ensure women's participation in equity with men during their X Congress⁶⁷; and in the X Congress of the COICA held on June 21 and 22, 2018, it was agreed that three women from the Amazon basin will be part of the Women's Technical Secretariat of the COICA, making progress in the effective participation of women in multiple organizations and decision-making positions of the COICA.

An outstanding event was the election of Rukka Sombolinggi⁶⁸ as General Secretary of the Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the archipelago - Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara-AMAN, a community organization working from the local to international level, and whose vision to create

63. Source: AYNI. IIFW. ifs.ayni@iifw.org.

64. OCD.

65. The member organizations of COICA are: Coordinator of indigenous organizations of the Brazilian Amazon COIAB, CIDOB, Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia, AIDSESP-Inter-ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle, CONFENIAE-Confederation of the nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, OPIAC- National Organization of the Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon, ORPIA-Regional Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Venezuela, APA, Association of Amerindian Peoples of Guyana, OIS-Indigenous Organizations of Suriname and FOAG-Federation of Native Organizations of French Guiana.

66. See Resolution of the Second Congress of Indigenous Amazonian Women. Indigenous women: together we are stronger. June, 2018. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZWivjdd-Ewa7DN9yvkQ6Z6C9_RIS5Xc1/view

67. SERVINDI. Intercultural communication for a more humane and diverse world.

68. Rukka Sombolinggi is a Toraja from Sulawesi, and in 2017 she was elected as the first woman to be Secretary General of AMAN. Previously she was Deputy to AMAN's Secretary General on Policy Advocacy, Legal and Politics.



a prosperous and just life for the indigenous peoples of Indonesia. AMAN represents 2,332 indigenous communities with 17 million individual members in Indonesia, which allowed placing an indigenous woman, identified as a defender of the environment in a position that allows taking approaches and demands to other levels.

Indigenous Peoples and governments do not have a great history, but we are rewriting history in order to have a promising future together. It has not always been easy, but earlier this week, we took a step forward. On Monday, a coalition of indigenous peoples, local communities and subnational governments agreed on guiding principles for collaboration.

And it started with the following two points:

-We recognize and respect the right of indigenous peoples and local communities to their territories, cultures, self-determination and governance,

-We recognize the historic contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities to maintain forest resources and the environmental services that these forests provide to society as a whole,

Let me repeat — “we recognize” and “we respect.” This is so important.

How did this happen? The Governors’ Climate and Forests Task Force voted in favor of a new way of working with indigenous peoples, starting by implementing the acknowledgement and respect as an important step.

We start the week with a dinner - an opportunity for friendship and learning, to try Indonesian foods and exchange words of solidarity.

Now that this relationship has solidified, we need to take it to the next level. We need to work even more, take it from only being on paper and make it a reality. It is our collective challenge and opportunity. We have the platform; we have the political commitment — of all parties — and we need to continue forward together.

Source <http://www.aman.or.id/aman-secretary-generals-closing-speech-at-global-climate-action-summit/>: Jakob Siringoringo. Words from the General Secretary of AMAN at the Climate Action Summit. California. September 2018. Translation by authors of the study.

g. Coordination in networks, alliances, synergies and accompaniment in processes in different places that seek Environmental Justice.

The defense of indigenous territories, as well as the search for synergistic actions at the global level, has brought different types of working alliances. An interesting experience with an active participation of indigenous women activists is the Elatia Network⁶⁹ (Network of Indigenous Organizations on Climate Change, Forest and Sustainable Development). Elatia, a word in Masai that means “neighborhood,” refers to the importance of reciprocal work and cooperation among peoples in order to achieve development objectives from the perspective of indigenous

69. Network formerly known as Indigenous Peoples’ Global Partnership on Climate Change, Forests and Sustainable Development.



peoples. This global network is made up of 18 organizations in 14 countries in three regions (Latin America, Africa and Asia).

The organizations that are part of this network are ⁷⁰:

- Philippines:
 - Indigenous Peoples International Centre for Policy Research and Education (TEBTEBBA).
 - Silingan Dapit sa Sidlakang Mindanao (SILDAP).
 - Naundep ni Napknuhan ni Kalanguya.
- Indonesia:
 - Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN).
 - Institut Dayakologi⁷¹
- Bangladesh:
 - Maleya Foundation
- Nepal:
 - Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)
- Vietnam:
 - Centre for Research and Development in Uplands Areas (CERDA)
- Cameroon:
 - Lelewal
- Kenia:
 - Mainyoito Pastoralist Integrated Development Organization (MPIDO)
 - Indigenous Livelihoods Enhancement (ILEPA)
- Democratic Republic of Congo:
 - Dignite Pygmees
- Tanzania:
 - The Pastoralist Indigenous Non-Governmental Organization Forum (PINGOs FORUM)
- Mexico:
 - Mixe Pueblo Services – Mixe Assembly for sustainable development
- Peru:
 - Center of indigenous cultures of Peru (CHIRAPAQ)
- Nicaragua:
 - Center for the Autonomy and Development of Indigenous Peoples (CADPI)
- Brazil:
 - Conselho Indigena de Roraima (CIR)
- Paraguay:
 - Federation for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples (FAPI)

70. <http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/content/our-partners-and-networks>.

71. <http://dayakology.com>.



The association between organizations and networks has allowed for visualizing the role of indigenous women in the places where they carry out activities, as well as through meetings, training and studies carried out. The association has been promoted and supported by Tebtebba, which has a gender mainstreaming program in various aspects through:⁷²

- The encouragement of gender equity and sensitivity in indigenous organizations, networks and communities;
- Secretarial support to the Asian Indigenous Women's Network;
- Studies, advocacy and training jointly conducted for indigenous women's organizations

This association enabled the participation of indigenous women in local, national and global processes such as: establishment of local Participatory Monitoring Systems, REDD+ processes, negotiations on climate change, climate financing, among others.

Another articulation experience promoted by indigenous women, allowing them to influence and promote changes at different levels, has been the case of the Organization of Indigenous Women, Wangki Tangni Mairin Asla Takanka Ta Upla,⁷³ well-known as Wangky Tangni⁷⁴, located in Waspam, Coco River.

It is an organization working in 114 communities on the northeast border of Nicaragua with Honduras, which combines food security work with training in Human Rights, fight against the various types of violence suffered by indigenous women, and responsible governance of indigenous territory. One of its programs offers indigenous women sustainable development programs, training indigenous Miskitu women in organic agriculture and providing families with seeds. The program emphasizes sustainable land use methodologies, safeguards traditional indigenous knowledge about the management of natural resources and reinforces women's economic self-reliance.⁷⁵

As of 2008, they strengthened the coordination among the 114 communities when they realized that the situation of violence in the region had worsened. The end of the war in the 80s, the return of community inhabitants to the Wangki after the conflict, the worsening of environmental degradation, the increasingly severe impact of climate change and the advance of the agricultural frontier on both sides of the border, placed the communities in a serious situation of vulnerability. This situation contributed to the breakdown of traditional community cultural and social relations that had helped in the past to respond to community crises. Cultural and spiritual values deteriorate as a result of war, confrontations and organized crime on the border. A consequence of this serious situation was the increase in cases of violence against women and girls in the communities.

72. <http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/content/our-program-areas>.

73. <http://www.wangkitangni.org/sobre-nosotras/historia>.

74. <http://www.wangkitangni.org>.

75. See: A common right. Nicaragua. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pRmcyYuOWo>.



In 2008, using their strength and collective moral authority, they called the other sectors to meet at the First Forum of Indigenous Women of the Wangki against violence. By raising awareness about the problem and by assuming commitments, a process of joint struggle participatory monitoring systems began. The initial commitments were to:

- Continue strengthening their organizations and networks, so that their proposals will be transformed into laws, public policies, programs and projects allowing the good living of their families and communities;
- Encourage the free, prior and informed consent as a mandatory consultation mechanism for the actions to be carried out in their communities;
- Take the message to each one of their communities, their communal, territorial, and municipal authorities in order to involve them in their plan; and,
- Call for governmental and non-governmental organizations, international multilateral and bilateral cooperation, communal and territorial authorities, universities, research centers, women's and Human Rights organizations and networks to join complementary efforts with human, technical, material and financial resources for implementing the action plan that they adopted.

Throughout the last decade, other complainants have joined, including the Autonomous Regional Council and Government of the RACCN, Agencies of the United Nations System, Center for the Autonomy and Development of Indigenous Peoples- CADPI, MADRE. In order to carry out studies and specific activities, it has been significant for them to have the valuable contribution and technical assistance of the International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIFW), the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico, and the Network of Indigenous Youth.

The Wangki Tangni Organization and the organizations of women from indigenous territories have signed agreements with the Judiciary, the CRACCN-GRACCN, the PNN and the Wihtas (justice authorities in each one of the 114 communities) for the institutionalization of the agenda on the fight against intrafamily violence in the Wangki establishing the SAFE COMMUNITIES approach. They have network made up of 237 women's rights defenders, who work in the Waspam neighborhoods and communities. Annually, they have updated the baseline on the situation of violence in the communities identifying the types of violence suffered by women and girls in the Wangki communities. At least, 250 women's families participate annually in productive activities and have organized traditional production and food fairs twice a year.

The Indigenous Women's Forum of the Wangki has become a space encouraging and monitoring public policies linked to the participation of indigenous women in public life, and it is linked to The Voice of the Women of the Wangki, a community radio station. The articulation with the IIFW and the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico has allowed them to continue increasing the indigenous women's and have been able to occupy popular and community elected positions. At present, they have female presidents of GTI, community judges, a female president of the CRA and Municipal Mayor, who are members of the organization.



h. Through the visibility of women defenders and processes led by indigenous Women.

On multiple occasions, the international community has acknowledged the role of indigenous women in the conservation of the environment and land use in sustainable conditions. In the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), principle 20 states that “women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.” Likewise, in the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995), it was stated that “...women, and especially indigenous women, have special knowledge related to the ecological links and management of fragile ecosystems.” Finally, in the 2015 Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, it was stated that “... it is imperative that the Governments recognize how indigenous peoples make their decisions through coordinating actions, encouraging women’s participation.” The IACHR identified the role that indigenous women have played in various processes of defense of indigenous territories (Murcia and Puyano, 2016).

The fact is that indigenous women have always participated in the struggles of their people along with men, however, they have generally been covered up. Therefore, another thing they have put into practices is to begin to make shed light on their contributions to the struggle, assuming the challenge of shedding light on their individual contributions, but as a complement to the collective struggle of other women and often of other members of their communities.

In any case, the acknowledgement of countless indigenous women as “defenders” has been an important practice to shed light on their contributions and call to attention about the situation of their respective communities and peoples. At the international level, we find different awards that recognize the defense of territories and environment. For example, the Goldman Environmental Foundation Prize and the United Nations Environment Programme Champions Awards (UNEP).

The participation of active women in the positions of activism, for the defense of indigenous territories, collective rights and Environmental Justice occurs throughout the world. Not all of them have international awards, but they are known at the community and territorial and national levels, as the ones that promote the very defense of the rights of indigenous cultures.

i. Through conventional means of communication.

One of the practices used by indigenous women to shed light on the situation that the communities have to deal with has been the media, as in the case of Joenia Batista de Carvalho⁷⁶ from the Brazilian Amazon. She belongs to the Wapixana people, in the Northeast of Brazil, State of Roraima. Despite the discrimination she faced especially at school, and by the same indigenous authorities, she graduated as the first indigenous lawyer in Brazil and as Joenia has pointed out, “that is the reason why I studied law, to become someone who can support indigenous communities” and, she added in an interview about this issue, “for me, it is about the possibility

76. The lawyer Joenia Wapichana will be the first indigenous woman to occupy a chair in the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil after being elected in this year’s elections (2018).





of doing something for ourselves, without waiting for orders from the Government or people who want to take away our land.” Another aspect highlighted by Joenia is the need to work harder in order to demonstrate ability.

She has devoted her life to fighting for land rights and against deforestation. In 2004, she filed a complaint before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, demanding from the Government of Brazil the delimitation of the Raposa-Serra do Sol Reserve and simultaneously she submitted the case to the Supreme Court of Justice in Brazil. In April 2005, under the government of President Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva, the area was officially acknowledged. Although the Government of Roraima and the army opposed it, she continued with the case and in May 2009, the Court acknowledged the Right of Indigenous Peoples over their territory.

It is worth pointing out that Joenia consciously accepted the use of her image, due to the notoriety she acquired with the case, in order to shed light on the situation of the indigenous peoples in her country. “I spoke with journalists about my life so that they would know about the reality of the indigenous peoples — so that they would know that they are human, have feelings and need to have access to their lands.” The working areas of Joenia have been to fight against the occupation of indigenous lands by companies, livestock, hunters and the reduction of the impact of climate change. It also trains indigenous women to take greater leadership, including in global negotiations on climate change.⁷⁷

j. Campaign for the visibility of Indigenous Women of FIMI- FAO.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in cooperation with the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (IIWF/IIWF) and the News Agency for Indigenous and Afro-Descendant Women (NOTIMIA), has launched the Global Campaign for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women for Zero Hunger.⁷⁸ The global campaign aims to shed light on the challenges and contributions of indigenous women as a need to “leave no one behind” in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Agenda and, it is an opportunity to shed light on the contribution of indigenous women and the challenges they deal with on the road to achieving Zero Hunger and the Sustainable Development Goals. To the campaign, they have added approximately a hundred of organizations to global level.

It has also been used:

Land Rights Now

- Video on the role of indigenous women for responsible governance of land tenure. Video of the Campaign of the global call to action on our common goods made with indigenous women in Kisalaya, Nicaragua.
- Video link of women from Kisalaya: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pRmcyYuOWo>



77. Source: Editing by Megan Rowling; megan.rowling@thomsonreuters.com. Brazil’s first indigenous woman lawyer beats prejudice to battle for land rights. Thomson Reuters Foundation. 21 Aug 2014.

78. <http://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/campana-mujeres-indigenas/es/>.



k. The photography contest of the NOTIMIA⁷⁹.

Within the framework of the Global Campaign for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women for Zero Hunger, the News Agency for Indigenous and Afro-Descendant Women -Notimia-, FAO, and the IIFW, held a call in order to shed light on the contribution of indigenous women for food security and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 Zero Hunger of the United Nations Organization for Agenda 2030. You can visit the Photo Gallery of the awarded indigenous women, “Indigenous women and food security in Latin America and the Caribbean,” in the following link: <http://notimia.com/galeria-fotografica-mujeres-indigenas-y-seguridad-alimentaria-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe/>.

l. Using their own media and communication strategies.

Several organizations of indigenous women have promoted communication programs on the nutritional values of traditional foods, their own production systems and other issues related to environmental management and territorial governance.

In an experience recounted in Melanesia, it was stated that all people have the right to good health and nutrition, ensured through their own cultural and knowledge systems. The objective of the Melanesia Coffee project was to improve the community’s good living, food sovereignty and agrobiodiversity by exchanging knowledge about food among diverse communities.

The vision of Save PNG Inc. is that indigenous agricultural systems and culinary knowledge are protected for the next generations of the Pacific Region⁸⁰. Annually, it is celebrated with fairs about culinary art, agro-ecological practices and biodiversity. The organization Save PNG used an educational video to inform young people, women and families about local foods, their nutritional diversity and traditional food preparation to strengthen community resistance and traditional governance systems. The video was accompanied by an educational package that included a guide, agricultural innovations, and recipes.

It was disseminated through multiple media on good food practices, cultural strategies for the preservation of sustainable, accessible, easy to adopt and adjust food according to needs and local situations in Papua New Guinea, The Solomon Islands, Fiji and other Pacific islands.

m. Indigenous Women, winners of awards related to Environmental Justice, shed light on the processes in favor of their peoples.

a. The IIFW/FIMI Leadership Award for Indigenous Women.

In 2018, the IIFW/FIMI called for the Award in honor of the vision and creativity of indigenous women’s organizations struggling for Environmental Justice in their communities.⁸¹ The award

79. http://notimia.com/conv_notimia2018/

80. Cafe Melanesia: Our Lands, Our Foods, Our Future. Pawanka Fund.

81. <http://www.fimi-iiwf.org/detalle-nota.php?id=423>



is aimed at indigenous women's organizations in Latin America, Africa and Asia and seeks to promote a process of recognition and awareness of the historical participation of indigenous women in the protection of Mother Earth and its diverse and deep connection with the territory. It also seeks to strengthen and encourage good practices and collective experiences promoted by indigenous women's organizations as first caretakers of their environment, natural resources and livelihoods, acknowledging the cultural, spiritual, political or social contributions of women.



women from Sudan, Kenya and Uganda (Mary Kuku, Magaret Lomonyan and Pricilalh Nangurai)



Will insert a photo here of the women from Sudan, Kenya and Uganda being given the leadership award. (Mary Kuku, Magaret Lomonyan and Pricilalh Nangurai)

The Environmental Justice initiatives considered in the convocation have been: access to clean and safe water, demands and complaints about immoderate logging and deforestation, conservation and recovery of ancestral spaces, protection of knowledge related to traditional medicine, protection of health against the impacts of extractive industries and megaprojects, and strategies to adapt to climate change.

There are indigenous women who have won International Awards, which have allowed for the drawing of attention to situations that their peoples face, including:

b. Goldman Foundation Environmental Prize.

This prize honors environmental heroes and heroines from Africa, Asia, Europe, Iceland & Island Nations, North America and South and Central America. Likewise, people who have made significant efforts to protect the environment, often assuming personal risks are acknowledged by means of this award, which also acknowledges as grassroots leaders those involved in local efforts, where positive changes are achieved through citizen and community participation. Through the acknowledgement to individual leaders, the Prize seeks to inspire people to take extraordinary actions to protect the natural world⁸². Some indigenous women who have been awarded of the Prize in the recent years are Máxima Acuña, Berta Cáceres, Ruth Buendía, and Ikal Angelei.

Máxima Acuña	From the Peruvian highlands. She has confronted mining companies.
Berta Cáceres	She mobilized Lenca communities to put pressure on the Agua Zarca hydroelectric plant in Honduras.
Ikal Angelei	She has organized local communities to fight against the construction of the Gibe III Dam that would block access to water to communities located at Turkana Lake, a world heritage site, in East Africa.
Ruth Buendía	She promoted a campaign with the Asháninca people against large-scale dams in Peru.

c. 2018 Champions of the Earth Award.

The Champions of the Earth is the most representative environmental award of the United Nations that acknowledges the most outstanding leaders and visionaries in the politics, science, entrepreneurship and civil society action fields⁸³. The award, organized by the United Nations

82. <https://www.goldmanprize.org/about/>

83. http://www.cinu.mx/minisitio/PNUMA_Campeones/



Programme for the Environment (UNEP), seeks to acknowledge men and women whose actions and leadership have resulted in a positive impact on the environment, as well as inspire transformational actions in different parts of the world.

In 2018, Joan Carling, an indigenous Human Rights activist and environmental advocate from the Philippines, won the Champions of the Earth Award for her lifelong struggle. Joan reminds us of the vision of the indigenous peoples through her words.

“...their sense of community, their simple lifestyles, their cooperation and their lack of individualism had an impact on me. Their culture and values are intrinsically linked to their lands, lifestyles and identity as my Kankanaey People. The way these people took care of one another and the environment moved me and inspired me.

Over the years, I have seen first-hand the environmental devastation caused by large dams and gold mines. For us, they are not development projects. We do not design them or they are for us. They are only resource extraction. Mines leave toxic waste, so communities collapse. These projects cause massive displacement, impoverish and destroy the cultural heritage of our peoples.

I have seen indigenous peoples living in remote, silenced communities, unable to speak to protect their lands and environment. I have worked with them for more than a decade in order to add to their knowledge, through protest and dialogue. We get involved with mining companies, dam builders, local authorities and media and created supporting groups through partnerships in order to protect the human resources and the environment. Despite threats, risks and more repression, I have persevered in my work along with other leaders.

It is time to strengthen our resilience!

Through my work with communities in the Philippines, Asia and beyond, I have found that this is a global issue. We need to bring up the voices of indigenous peoples to the debate and make policymakers hear them. Indigenous environmental defenders are experiencing the devastating effects of militarization to allow development projects. Indigenous leaders are imprisoned and killed, while communities remain weak. It is painful, but it has also strengthened my commitment to work for Human Rights and environmental sustainability.

Together with other leaders, we are strengthening our networks and capabilities. We are building alliances to protect our rights and the environment. We are campaigning at the regional and local level for Human Rights and the sustainable management of resources, community-based adaptation to climate change and renewable energy. Thus, we are building up resilience.

The indigenous peoples are not the enemies. We are not against development. We are conserving our environment for the future of humanity, but we cannot do it by ourselves. The global community, governments, businesses and civil society must be supportive and assume responsibilities to achieve sustainable development for all.

Source: <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/joan-carling-winner-champions-earth-award-lifetime-achievement> https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=164&v=cRFSyQV5hMc



6.2. Promote and practice healing for good living

“I am the stone. I was made out of small and tiny pebbles of dust. Through time, I became big and heavy, and I went gathering stories and safeguarding souls.” — Celerina Sánchez.⁸⁴

A distinctive feature of the indigenous women’s movement, which has been incorporated into the activities linked to the struggle for Environmental Justice, are the healing rituals, which are part of the worldview of each town. This practice is based on the interrelation between the elements of their spirituality, human beings and nature that make up their worldview:

“For us, it is about how we relate and communicate our ideas about the supreme being, about nature, and about people. In that vision of the world the spirits in which we believe, the supreme being, plants, birds, cows, chickens, river, mountain are present. Women and men, the elderly, adults, youth, adolescents, children are also there. And, how do we relate to each other?”

These relationships, that worldview, are regulated in our communities. It is what we know as the Laws of the community, the indigenous laws of the community. Those rules also define how we relate to spirits. For example, if you go to the mountain, when you get back home ... before breastfeeding your “pipito”⁸⁵ ...you have to unravel the spirit of the mountain ... so as not to make your baby sick. If you are going to fish and you are pregnant ... what happens? Or if they are going to hunt ... why do men wear a red cloth? If you are going to cut a medicinal plant, you have to ask for permission. That is, through rituals and ceremonies we communicate with the spirits ... with the sacred stuff ... And, we learned all that from grandmothers and grandfathers ... through those actions we do in the communities, we seek to communicate with the people about the sacred in their lives.”⁸⁶

As we can see, spirituality is part of women’s daily practice, who have an important role in their reproduction and the responsibility to ensure that people apply these values in the community, as they stated it in an interview conducted during the study:

“When practicing spirituality, we learn to appreciate what we have ... We learn to respect our brothers and sisters. We learn to share. With spirituality, we learn that stones and water feel ... they have strength ... we learn that women and men are the same ... we complement each other ... we are both part of nature ... and, we practice those relationships through ceremonies and rituals that are very different in each town, in each culture. But in every town and every culture, the spiritual guides do and say things that are priceless for the people. We understand the ritual in our community because we understand the language and know the symbols. We know what we have to do.”

84. Indigenous poet, participant in a dialogue about art and traditional knowledge. IWF Alliance of indigenous women of Central America and Mexico. 2017.

85. Pipito: baby or little child.

86. Wangky Tangni women’s focus group. May 2018



*When the ceremonies are held, we are all confident about the sukya, the guide, the spiritual guide, the midwife, the healer who conducts it ... because the ceremony communicates us with the sacredness of our culture and ... unites us as village ... and it is that an indigenous people with identity puts their spirituality into practice. For us, as women, spirituality is important when we have been mistreated ... or if we have been discriminated. It helps us to recover our self-esteem ... it helps us recover our dignity ... that is what we call healing ... with healing we are back in connection with the supreme beings, with the spirits, with nature and with the sisters and brothers of our family and community.*⁸⁷

For indigenous women, healing is therefore a set of traditional knowledge and ancestral practices passed down by grandmothers and grandfathers, and spiritual guides, which are part of the Peoples' worldview, which enable to maintain, restore the balance and harmony of the individual and collective being; to prevent harm, relieve impotence, pain, fear, dread, anger and guilt. It also allows for internalizing their oppression and help them to come to themselves, to acknowledge themselves and be acknowledged again in their dignity and integrality.⁸⁸ Now, healing can take place in the individual, family or community.⁸⁹

Healing is an indigenous practice used by women and men of indigenous peoples in the face of demands for Environmental Justice, since it affects them on a personal level, but as part of a collective, of a community, causing loss of harmony. Healing, therefore, is a culturally relevant "communal institution," which indigenous peoples use to find justice, and try to regain harmony and balance. The search for Environmental Justice implies working to strengthen the indigenous institutions themselves, respecting and/or taking back the worldview, the systems of rules and authorities. To achieve this, they combine political mobilizations and organizational strengthening measures with cultural practices and rituals that contribute to mitigate discomforts, whether physical, spiritual, social or environmental ones, but especially to take back dignity and collective self-esteem, to take back and strengthen the structures of ancestral governance.

Healing therapies vary between communities and objectives pursued in the ritual. Some women have documented the use of meditation, healing massages or even everyday activities such as combing hair among peers:⁹⁰

"Meditation as an act of speaking to and finding oneself, stimulates self-healing, provides greater awareness and creativity, stimulates and reinforces the areas of the brain assigned

87. Wangky Tangni women's focus group. May, 2018.

88. IIFW. Exchanges, PATH. Dialogue of knowledge about violence against indigenous women. Methodological approaches for intercultural research. Mexico, 2013.

89. IIFW, 2013.

90. Our voices, our ancestral knowledge, are the result of a collaborative process among the IIFW, the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico and Wangki Tangni, within the framework of the project "Art from the indigenous worldview as a tool for spiritual healing in cases of violence against indigenous women," with the financial support from the PAWANKA Fund.

The main objective of the project was to document, through art, cases of violence against indigenous women, but also to document and shed light on those practices of spiritual healing, implemented by indigenous women in cases of violence, highlighting their fundamental role in these processes.



to happiness and joy, increases the IQ and stimulates the immune system, allows experience sensations that stimulate healing. The starting point is to identify each part of the body and state when we realized that we are indigenous women, healers, folk healers and midwives and how we have been violated, and finally how we have overcome these different types of violence, as well as modify negative beliefs about ourselves, and begin a path of forgiveness and healing of our body and mind.”⁹¹

“Through positive massages, the positive energies attract positive energies, and that is why holding hands or giving massages, according to the indigenous worldview, is one of the methods for giving and receiving healing energies. Indigenous women as midwives, healers or sukias consider that massages serve to cleanse the aura (energies of the body), regulate the activity of the body, unblocks some parts of the body and mind, increases self-awareness, silences the mind, favors concentration and mental clarity. It increases the body defenses, enhances blood circulation, generates comfort and healing. The wisdom of this traditional knowledge passed on from generation to generation.”⁹²

“One of the physical, but also spiritual elements of acknowledgement and relationship among the different generations of women has undoubtedly been combing each other’s hair, and many women manage to connect their spirituality. We work in pairs, as an offering of trust to the other partners and in acknowledgement of each other.”⁹³

There are rituals that take place in specific energetic places, such as rivers, mountains, caves, roads, places where there are strong energies. Rituals take place in agricultural and forestry practices, in seed selection. There are sowing and harvest rites, rites of passage between the cycles of life: birth, puberty, marriage and death. These are spiritual expressions in daily life; for example, to thank the dawning day, to give thanks before eating food or starting activities, asking for permission and respecting the dignity of each tool used to perform different tasks. The dialogue with the land/territory and the whole environment in meditation and ceremony with the ancestors is important as well.

“Dance can be a healing therapy. The before, the now and afterwards. It is the opportunity to thank our ancestors, with respect, seeing in the underworld and above the world the healing from the observation that animals migrate. This is how you should dance.”⁹⁴

During healing, it is possible to read through the candle or fire, copal, corn to find out with truth, where the person has become ill, what has been the breaking factor of harmony, in order to do the rituals and offerings or cleanings. Learning how to perform the healing is also acquired in different ways:

91. See Healing with female voice. IIFW. Wangki Tangni.

92. Our voices, our ancestral knowledge. IIFW. Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico.

93. Our voices, our ancestral knowledge. IIFW. Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico.

94. IIFW. 2013.



“My grandmother was a midwife and she taught me about the herbs when she went blind. I was responsible for collecting the herbs. I got back to using herbs when my son became ill and I went to treat my son with the folk healer, but that lady scolded me and told me that I was a fool, and she also attended to me very reluctantly. I thought that maybe she thought I was not going to pay her or something, because I was very poor as I barely had any money.

When it was my turn to come in, she told me: you are going to treat your son. Not me. So, I’m going to tell you what plants you are going to use: basil, mountain rue, domestic rue, lima leaf, tempaxochitl leaf, because the Lord told me that you have a gift, and you can treat your son. So, go and do it! Because your son has merlachia (depression). So, that is how I started using my plants again, and that disease is treated at night, so he does not get hit by any other air.”⁹⁵

The techniques and practices of healing and protection, implemented by the sukia women⁹⁶, sobaras, midwives and traditional women doctors of the indigenous peoples are associated with physical and spiritual elements of nature which, as found out in the interviews, allows us to observe the use for individual and collective therapies, linked to natural resources, but also allows for seeing the importance that indigenous women give to natural resources:

a. What element of nature do we work with?

Mangrove	For treating kidneys, diabetes, gastritis and urinary track issues. For disinfecting the womb. It protects against hurricanes, gives pure air and shade. It protects the life of animals in the water such as fish, crocodiles, birds.
Coconut	Its water, meat and oil have healing properties. It is a cream intended for the whole body, externally and internally. It gives shade and it is not so easy to get knocked down by strong winds or hurricanes. It adapts to climates, refreshes and hydrates.
Soil: the land on which we move along	It gives strength for living. “It is used to heal us, to share it with other people who have wisdom based on their ancestors; for example: the moringa that heals everything and gives energy to the person who suffers from anemia.”
Lagoon water	It helps us to have peace, inspires and gives life, provides food and medicines.
Trees and plants	When their leaves dry and fall they serve as fertilizer.

95. Gloria Seráfica Torres Silva.

96. In the Miskito culture, in the North Caribbean of Nicaragua, the “Sukias” are women who possess knowledge to heal and restore spiritual balance.



Forest	It is much more than plants and trees. It is a source of life and the fundamental basis of ancestral knowledge.
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Source: Dialogue within the framework of the project “Art from the indigenous worldview as a tool for spiritual healing”, the sukias grandmothers, sobaras, midwives and traditional doctors.

Therefore, it can be concluded that “healing” is a set of practices and collection of traditional knowledge to which the indigenous peoples can resort - as a kind of individual and collective therapy - to achieve their recovery as worthy, productive, and balanced persons, families and communities. Healing is nourished by each people’s worldview, and each context offers the physical and symbolic cultural elements used for healing rituals. According to the indigenous worldview, spirituality, which is the core element of healing rituals, is the relationship of human beings with the material and immaterial world. For the indigenous peoples, not only the human being has a soul and life, but also everything that comes from nature and coexists in and with it; therefore, they possess a great healing power.

The healing practices serve to relieve physical pains of the body, cleanse and purify the soul, strengthen the heart, purify the blood, heal from several diseases, and to maintain healthy family, community and culture ties. The National Institute of Health/National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), defines traditional healing as a Comprehensive Health System that combines a series of holistic therapies used by indigenous therapists for a variety of conditions and aims at achieving wellness. The same center states that ceremonies play an important role, involving patients, families and community throughout the healing process, which might last several days or weeks and concentrate a lot of energy through the participation of a large part of members of the communities through songs, prayers, music, dances, which combine to create synergies, traditional and religious symbols and ritual objects.⁹⁷

During the interviews, the indigenous therapists talked about the challenge they are still facing in the practice of their traditional knowledge, as they are often discriminated against. They state that they treat with cultural elements, such as plants, herbs, eggs, soil and/or water.⁹⁸

b. Some symbolic elements used in rituals.

The fire	Fire as a source of light is life, energy and food. For that reason, it is used to provide the human being with individual and collective harmony. It allows for burning the negative past, letting it go from everything that’s bad and start over again with the light of a new day. The healers have the gift of connecting with the divinity. Some techniques used are to heat special points of the body with suckers, healing with ocote, candles, cold healing, nightmares. To heal colds, Vicks VapoRub is heated, clay bowl, with animal fat, hot tomato, heated castor for cough.
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97. Indigenous Native American Healing Traditions. Mary Koithan, PhD, RN-C, CNS-BC and Cynthia Farrell, MSN, FNP-BC

98. Amalia Salas.



<p>The plants-herbs</p>	<p>Medicinal plants have played an important role in the lives of indigenous people throughout history who manage and know the many uses that can be given to plants and this traditional knowledge is an important basis for the livelihood of native people. The application of this knowledge has been passed on from generation to generation. Mother Earth provides plants of different characteristics and sizes with healing properties against the diseases of the body, headaches, scares, wounds in any part of our body.</p> <p>There are different ways to use medicinal plants, including teas, ointments, syrups, juices and tinctures. To administer this type of medicine, age and severity of the disease are taken into account and, to obtain good results, the treatment must be followed. It is necessary to guarantee good care and use of resources from different areas of society. Therefore, it is important to ask permission when cutting the plants, and most importantly, giving thanks for their healing. It is very important to know the doses of each plant.</p>
<p>Stones</p>	<p>The stones as a symbol of energy source and healing power have a great value for many indigenous peoples from different cultures. The stones, according to their color, are attributed various healing properties for the body and soul. Thus, indigenous peoples use stones to calm physical, mental and emotional pain, to give massages, and for protection.</p>
<p>Wind</p>	<p>The wind is everything we are: word, thought, sounds, music, birds, songs, prayers, tobacco, aromatherapy. All of these are elements of treatment and healing, as well as everything that has to do with the wind that feeds or nourishes them in any way to become what we need.</p>
<p>Water</p>	<p>Water as an element of nature purifies and heals. It is life because thanks to it Mother Nature feeds and gives fruits to nourish human life.</p>

Source: IIFW, 2013.

Other procedures –shared by grandmothers– used in the healing rituals are:⁹⁹

Mandala

It is a circle inside another circle, from which figures emerge, showing symmetry and pointing out and representing something symbolic. By this means, the lunar mandala is formed and it allows us to observe the spotting as it is, its color and consistency, smell and we go seeing ourselves. The mandala will allow us to see the different seasons and how each relates to the environment.

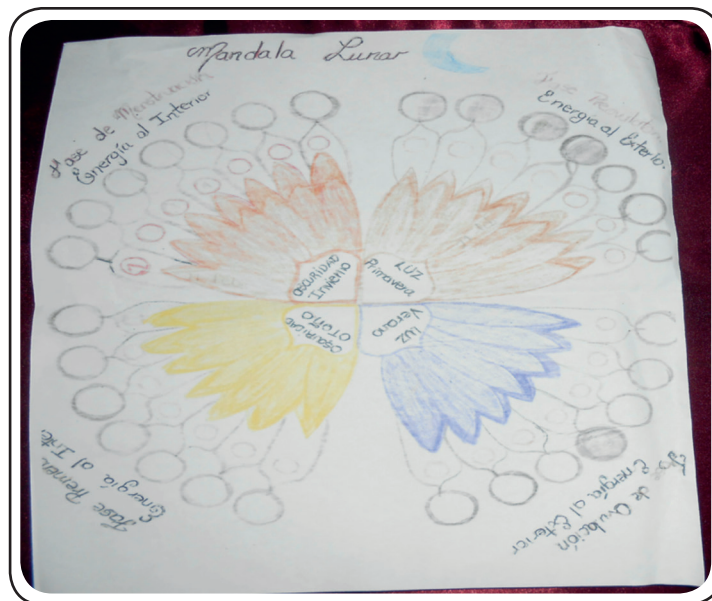
99. IIFW, 2013.





- Winter: Darkness
- Spring: Light
- Summer: Heat
- Autumn: Darkness

The moon also has a fundamental role in healing; therefore, we must be very attentive to the new moon and it is in that time when we should plant. If my menstrual cycle is good at this time, so it is good for what I want. In order to physically help the uterus, you have to do vaginal steaming with the plants.



Healing through breathing and music

An observation and relief technique for the mind is to specify, get arranged, and breathe in harmony with the music. It allows us to remember who we are, what we do to heal the mind, spirit and be happy. When we become aware of our breathing, we are healing and generating our own healing. It takes time and space to do the exercises. The person stands up, starts breathing slowly, trying to be aware of their breathing.¹⁰⁰

Healing from fear and dread

The indigenous communities maintain their own ways of healing and treating diseases such as with dread. In the cases of dread, children lack hunger, vomit, have diarrhea, high temperature and get up crying. In the elderly, it is about their bad temper, stomachache, sadness, and being sleepy. Our way to treat these conditions is with eggs, air herbs and waters, accompanied by our own ceremonial speech and in our own language.

Another recurrent disease in the communities is indigestion. It happens to many children, but often to older people as well. When the child is restless, cries continuously and their belly becomes inflamed; immediately vomiting, diarrhea and fever appear. It is treated with herbs, ashes, and giving massages to the child. The procedure consists of blowing on the person with herbs or small beats with the herb and, it can also be smeared on. Different flower essences, which accompany the ritual, are also used. The female folk healer sprinkles the sick person with herbs that she chews, as part of the cleansing of the bad air or the dread and the negative energies that person took in their being or soul is cleansed.

Personal and collective trust is fundamental within the organizational norms of the indigenous communities. In this sense, midwives, healers and “sobadoras” (traditional healers) from their

100. Edna Hernández



ancestral traditional knowledge and healing power perspective play an important role in the processes of community social construction, since through their community work, they build trusting relationships that contribute to the balance and wellbeing of all men and women. This respect and trust within the group is both to encourage acts of solidarity and the group dimension itself to prepare for working with others.

e. Testimony of a female folk healer

My learning experience when choosing the path of healing made me learn and accept many facets of myself that I did not understand. It led me to find my place in the world, with Gaia the Mother Earth, the Pacha Mama in Quechua. On that basis, I learned that health self-management is possible and should be encouraged, but not as we were led to believe that health is in the hands of some people who have the heritage of special knowledge about our bodies. As human beings, we have a privileged position of being able to communicate with each other, as well as with other non-human living beings, brothers and sisters. Women have been creating these bonds continually, because sometimes this communion with other beings has been natural, from our homes, by the oral tradition of the grandmothers. Who I am? A philosopher said: "I am a battlefield," made up of millions of identities inherited from the creation of the universe that come together. If one of those identities predominates (no matter what it is), then it will silence the others. So: how do I harmonize my life in the cosmos I inhabit and how do I relate to other beings? To achieve this, the ancestral healing processes are fundamental because they preserve the comprehensive perspective.

How can the healing process be an artistic act? The beauty as a fundamental element to heal. Personally, I learned to recognize my allied plants and flowers. They taught me to ask them how they want me to use them and for them to express their silent teaching.

Sometimes, I use flowers for certain baths in cases of harmonization. The combination of flowers, fruits, seeds and resins respond to a repeated and appropriate formulation of gestures of the art of creating customized remedies. Another way to work with that which is beautiful is to make bouquets, choosing the most appropriate ones for the personality of the persons to be served.

In many cases we work with existing flowers. The process of dialogue with the flowers repeats again, in this case, to ask for permission to help heal the person in question. The flowers have a certain path in their placement to achieve harmony in view of those who observe them. They follow the silent path of cleansing, energizing and raising the spiritual level of the places, that is why flowers are offered in temples and sacred sites, and that is why they also offer precious resins and wood that are burned due their exquisite aroma, in order to clean the spaces. Another element that I use are the floral waters, the essential oils to perfume and contribute to harmonizing people and environments.



Prayers are poems that flow in the air and are the sounds issued in the form of prayers and invocations to ask the forces of nature to give permission to people with the affections or pains so as to harmonize both their spirit and body.

The offerings or “ritual tables” for the deities are built following patterns related to what is considered to be useful for making happy, being heard and accepted by the gods and guardian gods or the Pacha Mama. It should not be elaborated with haste or carelessness. It is an offer of love and respect, which translated into reciprocity. It is a kind of mandala, where elements of the cosmos meet and are offered to the forces of fire and earth to please Mother Earth and her caretakers.

Seeing healing from that perspective, we can certainly say that many healing acts are the “art of healing.” I am not able to sing, but many people who perform rituals sing or dance, as for example with the candomblé for the Orixas and Mae Iemanjá.

Art is the approach to the act of creating the beauty of surrounding actions and objects. This process can only be achieved by the approach of the spirit to the divine, being at peace with oneself and the environment. Art should not be seen as a privilege of a few people who call themselves artists. On the contrary, it would be much more human to consider that all people can make a work of art of their life, where they are the directors of their work: life itself.

Nidia Bustillo. Quechua Healer. Bolivia

d. Healing through harmonization with natural and artistic elements.

One of the elements used to harmonize are the flowers. Grandmother Amalia Salas Casales uses roses in traditional rituals to harmonize. She is a traditional farmer in Xochimilco, where an ancestral agricultural method is applied, and combines her activities with ancestral healing, organized in a group of grandmothers, Guardians of Wisdom who defend the land and water.

“I got involved in healing because of my grandfather taught me how to harmonize with flowers (roses). Well, it used to be done with flowers, but now it is done with roses that have already been grafted. I use those roses.”¹⁰¹

The agricultural system of Xochimilco is at risk of extinction due to the loss of the ancestral territories, as Grandma Amalia recalls. “... the government of Salinas de Gortari dispossessed us. I have also dedicated myself to defending the land. I am from Xochimilco, Mexico City. They have stolen a lot of land from us there, since it is one of the few places left as an original town.”

Through a collaborative process between the IIFW, the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico and the Wangki Tangni Association, within the framework of the project “Art from the indigenous worldview as a tool for spiritual healing in cases of violence against

101. Amalia Salas Casales’ grandmother.



indigenous women,” several types of healing practiced by women were documented.¹⁰² The main objective of the project was to document, through art, cases of violence against indigenous women, but also to document and shed light on those practices of spiritual healing implemented by indigenous women in cases of violence, highlighting their fundamental role in these processes. The results of that process have been incorporated in this study.

According to the female healers and midwives who were part of the project implementation process, all of the values are learned in the sociocultural environment in which one grows up. One learns by watching, listening to some family conversations, in the community or church, and thus have grandmothers been doing this since ancient times. For example, they have done it by weaving, embroidering, sewing, dancing, narrating myths or legends. All these activities go beyond a simple daily practice at home, as they are part of the type of family and social relationship of women in the communities, which allows for getting to know each other, being able to reconcile themselves, and for making sense of their lives in other ways.

A particular form of healing, involving women, environmental resources, and the indigenous concept of Mother Earth is precisely the healing of the uterus, as pointed out by Norma Angélica Silva Torres.

“The uterus is like a refuge, a nest of energy and power. It is the core of life and survival. It is the place of creation and it is connected to the earth, where life is gestated, which is the most beautiful thing on earth and it connects us with Mother Earth. That energy in our uterus is a creative dance, an ancestral mystic power. The uterus keeps life and painful memories on the inside, that is why its release is so important because it keeps, renews and releases each cycle, but it does not happen at all times since there are pains that we cannot release in each cycle and they accumulate and that is why diseases are arise and our womb with the uterine pulsation connects with the heartbeats in our chest. They together and integrated generate the recovery of memories in the pelvic belt. To achieve this, we have to do a lot of healing work in order to know who we are and how we are on the inside and outside. In order to access this energy, you have to work and connect with the heart.

And how should this be done? First, the womb must be healed, that is, heal the ancestral wound of the feminine. Practically all women embodied on earth today are wounded and sick due to all of the pain accumulated and created in the collective subconscious of humanity, as result of thousands of years of repression and using of the feminine. It is important to begin to heal our belly, women’s womb is impregnated at the cellular level of the wound of centuries of dominance and dishonor.

Our sexual relations have only made our wound worse. We have to start thinking that anyone who does not treat us with reverence and respect has no right to enter us. Woman’s healing and the assumption of her true power will also help man to heal because he will

102. Our voices, our ancestral knowledge, are the result of a collaborative process between the IIFW, the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico and Wangki Tangni, within the framework of the project “Art from the indigenous worldview as a tool for spiritual healing in cases of violence against indigenous women,” with the financial support of the PAWANKA Fund.



undo all the energy trapped through stories of hundreds and hundreds of incarnations, that create more pain and insecurity on earth.¹⁰³

There is a healing experience which precisely seeks to heal the uterus of the participants in the moon dance.¹⁰⁴ It is a dance which only women can participate in. Its objective, as previously mentioned, is to heal the female part as menstrual regulation, the uterus scarring is entrusted for healing. Throughout the ritual, the grandmothers are honored and women's lineage is blessed, giving thanks to the sacred gifts of each woman. The abovementioned terminology lineage or inheritance or genetics, linked to the ritual, is precisely about a spiritual hereditary relationship. The dance takes place in October because that is when the moon is strongest, when tides are also higher, linked to the strength of the moon. Therefore, the moon plays an important role in the life cycle of people, animals and plants.

The ritual lasts five consecutive days, during which 52 women dressed in purple robes, with white canvases and seashells dance in a circle, for five consecutive nights, under a full moon. During these days they fast and take temazcal baths. Every night during the dance, they make offerings of myrrh, copal, water, and touches of seashell to the four cardinal points, in addition to the "prayers."

They offer seeds wrapped in "prayers", that are bags made out of white, yellow, red and blue colored fabrics containing healing flowers of different scents, such as mallow, rosemary, basil, roses, and lavender. They prepare the bags in advance, putting the flowers out to dry and then placing them inside the "prayers," together with different types of seeds. Each woman makes 208 prayers, 52 per each color: white, red, yellow, white, blue, dedicated to water, fire, earth, and air.

Throughout the dance days, 208 prayers are being offered, and in order to have a stronger connection with the moon and deities, the dancers have to fast during the five days alternating fasting with massages and temazcal baths. The dance is done in a circle around sowing nopal, maguey and a rose bush. The ritual is directed by one of the grandmothers, supported by four women, one per cardinal direction, as each one of them leads a course. The four women have previous experience in dancing.

The duality relations are managed in such a way that men, who cannot dance but are male strength bearers, are assigned the role of caregivers, they bring tea to the dancing women, and also bring the stones to the temazcal, per each door that is offered in the temazcal (a pyramid of stone covers the temazcal, they open the door, throw a stew of herbs, the temazcal can have 5, 8 or 12 doors).

They enter the temazcal naked (or in a bathing suit), singing and blessing the uterus. The round shape of the temazcal represents the mother's womb, and what is worked in the temazcal is the relationship with the maternal figure (previous traumas such as birth with forceps, violent cesarean, births of unwanted children, among other things are treated).

103. Norma Angélica Silva Torres.

104. Interview to A. García. October 2019.



In some cases, a participant is not able face the traumatic situation, so she expresses it with feelings of suffocation, emotional regression, even regression to what her mother felt or what she felt when she was born. In those cases, when she cannot handle the steam, she must go to bed or ask for permission to leave. She cannot leave without the permission of the whole group, since it is about the energies of them all, *“when you cannot handle the steam ... you can have symptoms of suffocation, discomfort, need for contact, you might feel rejection to physical contact ... you must feel ... more than you are thinking ... you lay down or go out, but in order to get out you must ask for permission and have everyone respond ... but be careful! ... because it must be with the blessing of everyone ... because they are the energies of all of the women ... you can continue to the next door or you can leave ... but if you want to go back you must ask for permission ... it is a sacred dance that invites you to feel more than to think ... when you enter the temazcal and the dance you have to put out an intention ... your intention might be to be mothers, resolve menstrual irregularity, cysts ...among other things.”*¹⁰⁵

The moon dance must be held near a river because it transmits living water. When a cleansing or a healing is done, everything is discarded through sweat and must be taken to the river. It has to be a river of life, living water, because if the water stagnates, disease, worries, sadness stagnate, too, *“all the evils that you have in your heart.”*

The relationship between the moon dance with the environment is fundamental. Everything is related, the symbols, the elements they use, the place where it takes place, the chosen date. It is a fertility dance for which many plants of the region are used. Therefore, when the rivers are polluted or the plants at risk of extinction are used, the ritual cannot be done due to the lack of resources. At present, the extinction of endemic plants is occurring, which is endangering the female strength and with it the social cohesion since it is a dance for conflict resolution and construction of interethnic relations.

*“Unfortunately, without the ancestral context, it loses all of its magic and transcendence, which is why we are looking to resume and spread the authentic temazcal. Tlazolteotl is Mother Earth, she is considered the Goddess (nawal or energy) of the Temazcal, and it is believed that she devours what no longer serves us as human beings and changes it into new life.”*¹⁰⁶

*Within the Temazcal, which is the earth’s womb and where we will find our grandmothers, the steam makes us sweat and take out toxins from our body, so we are healing. However, the purification of the being inside the Temazcal goes far beyond the physical aspect, because the spirit also undergoes a detoxification through the words that are pronounced, negative thoughts that eliminate, the crying that the person releases, those destructive thoughts and emotions are changed into new energy, that is how the renewal itself is generated.”*¹⁰⁷

The work is based on causing the body to sweat by means of medicinal steam. Sweating, by itself, already has a high healing value, but, in addition, inhaling steam increases much

105. Arcelia García, Interview. 2018

106. Grandmother María del Carmen. Mexico, 2017.

107. Grandmother María del Carmen. Mexico, 2017.



*more the healing capacity of the Temazcal. This steam is produced by the contact between herbal water and red-hot stones. Each herb has different medicinal qualities. With the help of plants, the skin is cleansed, the body purified, the heart strengthened, the blood cleansed. In general, it cures many diseases, opens the mind, the perception itself to find a solution to one's problems.*¹⁰⁸

e. Healing to ensure production

Indigenous peoples hold ceremonies in several parts of the world for season changes related to nature (solstices and equinoxes). CHIRAPAQ, the Center for Indigenous Cultures of Peru, held a ceremony of payment to the land (offering) at the Acuhimay Tutelary Hill, located on the outskirts of the city of Huamanga, Ayacucho, to celebrate the solstice. At daybreak, when the sun's rays fall directly on the tropic of cancer, the shortest day and the longest night of the year occur, announcing the winter solstice, which symbolizes the beginning of the year for the indigenous peoples.¹⁰⁹

Indigenous Peoples, in the harmonious pursue of coexistence with nature, have been guided by the equinoxes and solstices of the path of the sun in order to create their annual calendars. The date sets the beginning of a new life cycle. In the Quechua culture, the movements of the sun and the moon display the sowing and harvest times for the agricultural cycle.¹¹⁰

Indigenous Peoples consider the winter solstice as a rebirth, setting the beginning of a new cycle of the fertility of nature. The harvest season is completed and the planting season is coming up, announcing that the sun is on its way back to earth, bringing back with it light and life.

In addition to the ceremonies, the communities carry out parenting practices on planting rituals, which have handed down from generation to generation, in which the traditional authorities play a fundamental role. In this regard, Néstor Chambi, recalled in an activity organized by CHIRAPAQ, that "In the Andean world everything is alive. Besides being alive it is also a person. So, one can talk to the frost, the hail and so on with all the other elements of natural energy," he explained. In order to prevent the fury of frost, for example, a secret is to leave an offering of food in a pot uncovered. The authorities also get together, set up their ritual table, hold a ceremony and with their varayoc (rod) redirect the frost. We feel these practices as a dialogue of respect between living beings, and from our association we seek to safeguard all of these secrets."¹¹¹

108. Grandmother María del Carmen. Mexico, 2017.

109. CHIRAPAQ. Winter Solstice sets a new fertility cycle of nature. Fraternal organizations participated in the ceremony, including the Quechua Indigenous Communicators Network of Ayacucho, the Organization of Indigenous Boys, Girls, Adolescents and Youth of Ayacucho Ñuqanchik and the Federation of Mothers' Clubs and Women of Ayacucho FEDECMA. <http://chirapaq.org.pe/es/celebran-ano-nuevo-andino-con-ceremonia-de-espiritualidad>.

<http://chirapaq.org.pe/es/crianza-ritual-de-la-chacra>. Chanbi Pacoricona of the Chuyma Association of Rural Support.

110. Idem

111. Néstor Chambi, from the Chuyma Association of Rural Support CHUYMA ARU (Puno).



Although some ancestral practices have assumed syncretic forms reflecting the results of cultural contacts, such as in the case of the indigenous Nahuatl women in the community of Chiepetepec in Mexico who annually celebrate a pre-Hispanic dance dedicated to good planting:

“Dozens of Nahuatl indigenous women from the community of Chiepetepec participated in the prehispanic dance of the milpa, a ritual that is also offered to the San Miguel Arcángel patron saint (who represents fertility). With symbolic representations such as the Yeyecacihuatl, the windy woman, Tonacayocihuatl, which represents the milpa, and the Tlajmajque, which is the rezandero, they thank the wind for having let the cornfield grow without knocking it down, the hills and the sky that brought the rain ... The ritual takes place every September 28th.”¹¹²

h. Healing for the revitalization of Indigenous Institutions.

Healing has also been considered as a path for the recovery of balance and the restoration of harmonious life within communities through the strengthening of identity. It can also be a path to justice within communities. Collective healing allows recognizing the importance that the community has to do justice because it allows the violated people to rebuild themselves and “recover” their dignity. Violated people need to feel the acceptance of the community again, the community vindicates and supports them. In the case of communities that have lost their institutionality or governance structures, collective healing can also help restore their dignity.

a.

Healing can obtain the status of public policy. Healing can be incorporated into a protocol required before different cases, so that people or communities can accompany their healing practices as part of the culturally relevant legal proceeding.

The practices encouraged by indigenous women’s organizations also seek to recover and/or strengthen traditional institutions of territorial governance, which have historically adopted measures to protect natural resources, such as in the case of Timor Leste, where efforts are being made to recover the Tara Bandu, which is a traditional institution of governance of the territory and resources in order to promote sustainability.

The “sadanlulik” communal ceremony begins with the sound of the sacred bell, and is addressed to the greater “Rai Oan” Clan or Sons of the Earth, with the participation of “Uma Dato” or House of the Leader, who is the authority responsible for the administration of community justice and “Lia Na’in” or the Owner of Words, who is the authority that preserves justice.

112. <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/galeria/estados/con-danza-agradecen-buena-cosecha#imagen-undefined> AIPIN. Dozens of Nahuatl indigenous women, from the community of Chiepetepec, participated in the pre-Hispanic dance of the milpa, a ritual that is offered to the San Miguel Arcángel patron saint. Indian Regions. AIPIN. Commission on indigenous affairs. September 29, 2018.





The regulations of the Tara Bandu are approved and legalized with the signature of the community leaders upon finishing the ceremony. Previously, they were only passed on orally, now they are reproduced in writing. The forest ancestral authority or Makle'at nominates 6 persons per community, and they are entrusted to ensure the compliance of rules, containing the list of prohibited materials. The rules are given to each one of them along with a piece of meat and some grains of rice to be placed in a public place in each community and it is made clear that the prohibitions will be valid until the day the harvest begins; until then, they can make use of any forest product.

The Tara Bandu was losing its strength, but through that ceremony the members of communities are reminded that they have the responsibility to manage and control resources, prevent degradation, promote reforestation and sustainability. It also defines the roles and responsibilities of community members. Each clan has a responsibility and the policy to strengthen the ancestral authority.¹¹³

In this sense, healing can be a way to restore balance and harmony within the community, restore the ancestral institutions that benefit women, and achieve community well-being. In this same order of concerns, it was suggested that by vindicating the worldview and healing as resources for the eradication of violence —including, eventually, the violence created by racism and discrimination— the structural and colonial framework, in which violence occurs and reproduces, should not be ignored.

“I am your companion. If you want, you can talk with me and I will always listen to you. I cannot answer you, but I can listen to you. Take care of me because I am the future for other generations, if you destroy me, the generations to come will not be able to know me, nor will I give you air, shade, nor will I listen to you nor heal you.”

Saying what you identify with means the continuity and permanence of their traditional knowledge and existence. It is to identify a space in the universe of the earth from where its roots of life grow. As you can see, the physical resources and spiritual elements occupy a very wide and valuable space of the resources of traditional medicine. These words show the feeling, care and special relationship between women of indigenous peoples and nature. They are the legacies which they share that allow us to remember their value as healers. It is like opening doors where the memories of our ancestors pass through.

6.3. Revitalization and promotion of indigenous productive systems and traditional foods.

67% of the planet's agrobiodiversity is in ancestral territories of indigenous peoples. Therefore, some strategies encouraged by indigenous women in order to achieve Environmental Justice are related to the revitalization and protection of the indigenous productive and food systems.

113. The Tara Bandu ceremony as the focal activity of the Documentation and Preservation of Indigenous Peoples' Culture and Practices Project was successfully implemented by Centro Juventud Covalima in the Fatumea sub-district, Covalima in Timor Leste. A media team produced a video documentary which was one result of the project. The project was implemented on February 11, 2017 with the support of the PAWANKA Fund. <https://bit.ly/2ltfjgw>. <https://www.pawankafund.org/blog-and-news/>.



It has also been found that the methodology applied by indigenous women for the restoration and promotion of productive systems and traditional foods is inclusive, directly resulting in the empowerment of women, their positioning as counterparts, business partners, strategic protagonists before the Public institutions to demand a response to the needs of their communities, as well as for the encouragement and protection of their individual and collective Human Rights. These processes are the result of constitutional and legislative reforms to ensure, in first place, the Right to Indigenous Peoples and within that framework, the women's right to land, territory and natural resources.

It is evident that despite the fact that the work of rural indigenous women constitutes a substantive basis for the economy of households and communities — combining a variety of productive activities such as seed, fruit and herb harvesting, fishing, working as workers or field workers— their work is not recorded, it is not valued and it is not computed into hard data for economic, social and much less cultural policies. It is a challenge to assess and measure their contributions, taking into account the diversity, food sovereignty.¹¹⁴

Likewise, although the productive model made them depending on the market, the organization of their activities do not follow the business logic of maximizing the capital invested, on the contrary; they maximize family income based on the optimal use of the ecosystem to which they belong with the family's workforce and the application of their own economic institutions. In the various practices analyzed, it has been found that reciprocity, barter and solidarity are part of the recovery of traditional food and production systems. In most of them, the functioning of the economic institutions of each indigenous people is encouraged, such as the Inti Raymi, Community celebrations, Pana Pana, “mano vuelta” (collective work), Biribiri, among other ceremonial activities.

For the same reason, the identified practices, in general, do not follow the logic of value chains because they do not bet everything on a single industry or production. The yields per item tend to be lower, but the family income through productive diversification is higher. In this context, policies for creating, strengthening and recovering local, regional and national rural markets with an emphasis on organic production and solidarity economy is the trend observed.

As a result of various practices, indigenous women began to encourage the incorporation of intercultural perspectives in policies and programs on food security and rural development, using in some cases mandatory planning instruments for public officers in order to include gender equity, the intercultural and intergenerational approach. Although it is difficult to identify a single strategy in the practices under analysis —precisely because of the holistic approach applied by indigenous women— efforts have been made to organize them according to the following axes:

114. Food sovereignty is the right of the Peoples to define their own policies and strategies for production, distribution and sustainable consumption of food, respecting their own cultures and their own systems of management of natural resources and rural areas. Its pillars are: focusing on food for the people, values of food suppliers, localizing food systems, local control; promoting traditional knowledge and skills, being appropriate for nature.



a. Linking the Indigenous worldview with production systems and Traditional Foods.

The worldview of the indigenous productive and food systems is expressed through a set of spiritual, cultural, and social practices involving ancestral spirits, stars, nature, and human beings. Ceremonies that are held periodically show those relationships. The restoration of spiritual cultural practices linked to the productive systems and food have been the objective of several organizations. In the Marshall Islands, in the Pacific, organizations of indigenous people with disabilities have carried out activities to this end.¹¹⁵

The Marshallese culture maintains many legends, myths, skills and traditional knowledge in its oral traditions, which are passed down from generation to generation. In the face of the threat of losing them and assuming the challenge of using them for the survival of the communities, indigenous people with disabilities carried out a process that enabled the exchange among the elderly and young people and people with disabilities, using the ancestral type of learning: listening and observing.¹¹⁶

Through stories, songs, stories, dances and practices, older people have taught young men and women to plant, fish, weave rugs and baskets, taking advantage of family and community gatherings. To the extent that the participants have learned these things, it has served them in their daily lives and would help them improve their diet and confront climate change, and they would appreciate them even more.

“The indigenous woman contributes to productive practices because she is seeing the crops, she is seeing the plants. She takes care of the water, talks to nature — because I converse. When you arrive at a sacred place, you feel happy to be so pure, you have pure air, so fresh and finally with some plants that even with just the aroma can heal you.”

The issue of the importance of territorial biodiversity enters into the discussion on Environmental Justice, without a balanced environmental space, production also diminishes, so it is another way of unbalancing the territory and culture survival.

So, how would I like (Environmental Justice) for us? We want it because it is a part of our life. For a woman, cutting down trees, it is like cutting down life. Even though we replace it with another plant, it is already replaced because it is life. Native plants, including sacred ones, produce much more and fertilize the land, and where there is no plant the products are not produced.

For us, the respect for plants implies being very careful, because if a branch is cut off, we often say “oh my God, a plant has been cut” and we, with so much pain, pick it up, and as

115. The project entitled “Strengthening Traditional Practices -Adapting to Climate Change” was implemented by Pacific Disability Forum with the support of the Pawanka Fund. <https://www.facebook.com/pawankafund.org/>. <https://www.pawankafund.org/blog-and-news/>

116. The Project entitled “Strengthening Traditional Practices -Adapting to Climate Change was implemented by Pacific Disability Forum with the support of the Pawanka Fund. <https://www.facebook.com/pawankafund.org/>. <https://www.pawankafund.org/blog-and-news/>.



I said, we have to leave the plant for them to fertilize and we cannot burn them, because they end life.

So, indigenous women always live as the guardians of life, guardians of plants, of the whole world. Inclusively, this is what Westerners do not understand: our way of life and how we live. Then, we live and take care of the world. Only them, the oil workers, lumberjacks, only think about the present, they are not trained and educated because where they cut down the trees and take out the oil it's because they really want to obtain the economic benefit, and not to take care of the life of all living beings. The plants are fertilizing for our animals in the world, the birds, other animals, they are part of our life that we have to respect.

Respect for water, because there are female and male plants. It has made identify with our mothers; this is for the house, the other plants are more delicate, they are for healing. The female plants are for healing. The myrtle is used for wood, the male plant, but the female plant is used for healing. It can be used in water, cooked, so that the hair does not fall out. There is a set of plants such as the poma, maque, myrtle, laurel that come together for bathing for when a woman gives birth. There we are healthy with those plants because we do not purchase those Western medicines. Only with that, we are already healthy. We have strength to work, strength. That is why I tell you that plants are life for women, they are whole life.”¹¹⁷

b. Awareness and valuation of Indigenous knowledge in production practices and traditional foods.

The indigenous production systems are based on the work of the nuclear or the extended family and sometimes with participation of the community. Besides being creators of family jobs and generating income for their family well-being, these systems coexist with the environment, seeking reproduction of non-synthetic fertility and protection of the soil, lagoons and water sources.

In the organization and development of traditional productive systems, women have multiple crucial jobs and roles. They contribute to the continuity and passing on of cultures, sustainable agriculture, fishing, horticulture, floristry, health, food systems and production, including the preservation of biodiversity through seed banks. The strategy, therefore, covers several activities and approaches, as stated in the following interview:

“Who raises chickens? Who plants the bananas? Who plants coconuts? Who plants the oranges? Who does it? Who picks them? Who cares for them? And men told me: ma’am, why are you telling us? We are men, we hunt, that is women’s work. Thank you very much, I told them. If you say that this is women’s work and women do it, why do men charge when it is time to pay? Why not women? And they say: no, women do not know how to count money, I am never going to do anything that might concern them.

117. LAC Ingenious Women’s focus group. June 2018.



From then on I told them: I want to see women who are the product owners. At first, they came reluctantly with their husbands, it was a rather long process. Now, women come, and they say, you know that you sell what is yours, and I am going to sell what is mine. Later, talking about prices, considering the traditional, emotional, spiritual value of the products, I realized the costs of natural products because they said, there is a lot and I give you this much, in bargaining as they call it, and then I standardized the prices. I encountered resistance from several public and private institutions, but I had to go and explain why I am standardizing prices.

Now, everyone knows how much they have to pay, they must pay for it in silence, if they want to work with indigenous peoples or do a workshop with indigenous peoples, they have to respect the standardized price. When the population realized that their products did not have much economic value, they were thinking about how to associate with those oil palm companies, with soy and cocoa, even knowing that those crops deteriorate the land, because they have some chemicals. I do not know much about those fertilizers, I have never used them, nor do I want to use them. But they use chemicals, and those chemicals are used for gain and in order to create another product out of those products.

When we started to standardize prices, men began to pay more attention to their traditional crops. And thus it began. We were meeting with this or that company and we wanted to do that job. But now that we know that our products have a very special value, and are needed throughout the area, so we are going to dedicate ourselves to it. In my area, no woman knows what credit is and I am fighting to keep it that way.

When we cultivate the farms, we cultivate some farms to plant banana and yucca to be used one year, and the next year we farm in another place while the first one's soil regenerates. It has a regeneration process. With respect to vegetables and other vegetables and fruits we do not need to cut virgin trees. Because we as indigenous people know the ecological calendar, because we know when we are going to go near the beach, clearing out and planting of the vegetables and fruits, beans, watermelons, gherkins and lots of fruits that we have. In that way we have respected the environment while preserving our traditions.

Environmental justice is for us because we are protectors. We cannot say since when indigenous women have given importance to environmental protection. Why? Because as we have heard, we have always been born with education or without education we have known that we are protectors. With our actions, with our daily work we are protectors, environmental caretakers, and we want to do it and continue doing it with our coming generations.”¹¹⁸

The activities aims at the encouragement and revaluation of local production for traditional foods, with the diversification of crops and the recovery of the biodiversity in the area under an agroecological approach towards the use of ancestral knowledge and practices and the improvement of nutritional conditions, encouraging the adequate consumption of traditional foods, bringing out their nutritional benefits and identifying them as part of the cultural legacy,

118. LAC Focus Group. June 2015.



increasing the availability and accessibility to seed management, the restoration and promotion of traditional crops, the restoration of the diversity of medicinal and aromatic crops and plants, among other aspects. These understandings and teachings are found in the collective memory of women in the communities, but current challenges for the restoration of those practices are also included:

“We remember when we were girls. Our mothers did not feed us with bottles; they breastfed us. The only milk we knew was breast milk. When we grew up, we ate roasted or baked bananas. We beat it and mixed it with water. With that food, we grew up healthy. The food was healthy. For example, we did not fry meat. It was steamed with herbs to add flavor and smell. Salt was obtained from boiled sea water until it evaporated, leaving salt.

In those days we did not know about rice. We only ate herbs, fruits, wild animal meat and fish. We ate “bisbaia,” a dish made by peeling bananas, wrapping them in banana leaves that were then buried. Several weeks later they were unearthed and shared among all the members of the community. They also made dried banana flour, which was ground and used to make tortillas.

There are many delicious Miskito foods, but now we are in such a hurry that we do not eat like they used to in the past. Girls no longer cook like their grandmothers did.

The climate has changed. It affects crop production according to the seasons and the production cycle of the basic grains. For example, rice was grown in April. These days, if it is grown at that time, it gets burned and lost. In the past, rice was cut into bunches that were dried on the kitchen beams, which covered the rice with the smoke of the kubus (the Miskito stove) and prevented the animals from eating them. The corn was also dried by tying ears of corn and hanging them out to dry. The system of collective production was maintained with the practice of ‘bakahnu,’ or ‘mano vuelta’ (collective work) with which all families helped one another to sow the seeds for planting and harvesting seasons. It ended with a party where everyone would eat.”¹¹⁹

c. Their own initiatives applying productive diversification and protection of native seeds.

As it is observed, diversification into productive activities (economic pluralism), such as fruit and other species, harvesting, fishing, soils, waters, and traditional seeds care and protection, specific activities (sowing, harvesting, caring), craft activities (weaving, among others), caring for livestock, pulling water, and inclusively the protection of collective environmental resources in the communities (Role in the rules of land use (conservation areas, reproduction of species, sacred sites, planting areas, fishing , etc.)).

In Peru, CHIRAPAQ,¹²⁰ has several years of experience in supporting productive activities, aimed at encouraging the increase of agricultural production; improving productivity, diversification of crops and restoration of the biodiversity of communities under an agro-ecological approach

119. Cunningham, R. Grandmothers’ conversations.

120. Chirapaq. Food security and sovereignty. <http://chirapaq.org.pe/es/secciones/soberaniaalimentaria>



oriented at the use of traditional knowledge and Andean ancestral practices; as well as improving the state of nutrition, focusing on the mother-child relationship, encouraging the adequate consumption of Andean foods and the execution of preventive healthcare actions.

The consumption of local foods has been encouraged by highlighting their nutritional advantages and identifying them as part of the cultural legacy. Through the activities, they share the people's community knowledge, carrying out actions with the participation of organized women from the Mothers' Clubs and soup kitchens, who have reinforced their training process in food contests based on local foods, and replicating what they have learned in their organizations.¹²¹

A transcendental contribution of the indigenous peoples in Peru has been the more than 3,500 varieties of native potatoes, which are grown in high Andean regions above 3 thousand meters of altitude, in places where no other crops thrive. There are areas such as the province of Vilcas Huamán (Ayacucho), where the rainfall regime has drastically changed, frosts are more intense, and heavy hailstorms have become unpredictable. These conditions have put the food security of indigenous families at risk, a situation that particularly concerns boys and girls.

In order to deal with climate change, 283 Quechua producers from Vilcas Huamán have recently been collecting and keeping the seeds of more than 300 native potato varieties, as a sustainability strategy based on traditional knowledge and ancestral practices, maintaining the balance between nature and human beings.

These varieties of native potatoes are considered foods of the future because of their resistance to extreme climates, pests, and diseases, in addition to their high nutritional value with high level of energy, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fibers, and being fat free. CHIRAPAQ, the Center for Indigenous Cultures of Peru, has accompanied this initiative along with the producers organized in the Association of Agroecological Producers of Vilcas Huamán, Saurama and Huambalpa (APAVISAH), with the support of Bread for the World.

The establishment of a Kichkiykuq irrigation system through a strategic alliance between the community of Huallhua, the district of Saurama, CHIRAPAQ Center for Indigenous Cultures of Peru, and Bread for the World (Brot für die Welt) has also been supported.

The work allowed the installation of sprinkler irrigation systems for 15 hectares of land, using rainwater in a sustainable way, complemented with the planting and harvesting of water (winter). To achieve this, in addition to the reservoir, infiltration ditches (level curves) have been installed. Additionally, native forest species, such as the quinales, have been planted on the edge of the ditches for greater sustainability and the provision of water produced by the forest.

In the work design, two invaluable types of traditional knowledge have been combined: indigenous knowledge and ancestral practices in water management and the modern irrigation technologies, that is, the indigenous science for harvesting rainwater, the *Para Yaku*, the *Para Yaku Huñuy* and the Ñawin Pukyu water's glance, the eyes for looking at the present and towards the future of Huallhua.¹²²

121. www.chirapaq.org.pe

122. <http://chirapaq.org.pe/es/secciones/soberaniaalimentaria>.





Similar actions have been documented in Mayangna communities in Nicaragua. In Karawala, women pointed out that mangroves used to be cut on the banks of rivers, and at the request of the communal authorities, regulations were established not to cut them but rather to plant them, and in this way they contribute to the conservation of water, as well as the offspring of fish and shrimp. In the Mayangna Sauni As territory, it was also ordered not to cut trees on the banks of rivers and streams, as well as to take care of the saplings (of the trees) that are growing.¹²³

For the Miskito Tuapi women, fishing is a very important activity since it is the basis of the families' diet. Most families fish for several days, then preserve the fish by salting and smoking them, which allowed them to use the fish for up to a year. That way of fishing contributed to the sustainability as they only fished for what they needed. Fishing is combined with agricultural activities.

Local traditional knowledge allowed them to read the signs showing when they would have better days of fishing. For example, when northerly winds blew and the sea was calm, it was a sign that there were many shrimps to fish. With the climate changes, it is no longer possible to read these signs.¹²⁴

The Cacica of Pantasma (woman chief), when referring to the own experience of the indigenous women of Santa María de Pantasma mentioned that they have a bank of local seeds — which they have established with the help of the government, specifically the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA)— in which there are sixteen (16) types of seeds. They defend family gardens and the use of their products. For example; she explained the stew is made with the chayote leaves because it contains many nutrients. The winter squash seed is also useful for food purposes. They depend on the organic fertilizer. They disinfect the plant and the hole for sowing bananas and taro, which can also be done with ashes.

d. Add value to traditional products: management and search for a fair market.

The strategy for encouraging traditional production has been combined with the search for adding an added value to the products as well as searching for fair and alternative market options. Some groups of women have joined the Slow Food Global Movement which, in recent years, created the Terra Madre Indigenous Network in order to encourage and protect the food production systems of indigenous peoples, highlighting their holistic vision and reinforcing ties with the Slow Food movement. In 2018, the included topics such as women as agents of change, rights over the land, indigenous youth as drivers of change, and indigenous chefs.

One of the experiences documented during the study was about the case of the poblano pepper.¹²⁵ Twenty years ago, a group of Nahua women from Puebla founded a company to produce dry sauces with serrano pepper (*Capsicum annuum*), which has traditionally been grown in the

123. Memory of the first Mayangna indigenous women forum. Rosita, 2015

124. Nadya Fenley. Recover the Pana-pana in the community of Tuapi.

125. The path of the empowerment of the Tlaola women and their serrano chili pepper. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ovV7qNhPOA&vl=es>.



area. However, despite its use since the pre-colonial era and being a very popular product in Mexico, its use declined due to its low cost in the market, the role of intermediaries and the low participation of indigenous women in marketing activities.¹²⁶

A group of women organized and through agro-ecological practices created the Seltsin company in 1992.

“We are traditional producers of serrano peppers and together with Slow Food we seek to dignify the production of a food that is very important for us, but we did not acknowledge it that way. For us, for the Mexican people in general, eating spicy is vital, it is part of our cuisine and it is something that we cannot leave behind. It has also become our daily breath. Day by day and due to the market place invasion, the Serrano pepper comes from China, whose price is lower than that of the traditional Serrano pepper, so the producers in my community stop growing it. What we did —well, my mom started doing it to get organized, and they said that we had to look for an added value to this product, first since we have to generate our income, but they also realized that with the market place invasions of other peppers from other countries, the mobility of the seeds from other countries, the local seed of our town was being put at risk. We started to prepare —first in our group, as we have to protect this seed because our cultural history is at risk, as well as our ancestral history— a dry sauce was prepared by her grandmother, and for them it is like we do not realize in this everyday life that part of our identity is at risk. So, they first started working on the economic aspect, then they realized the need to rescue a seed and then —their role as mom and the truth is that when mothers say ‘Either you come or I’ll make you come’— they started to involve our children and daughters ‘You go with me to the workshop to make the sauces, and so on.’ Seeing them, seeing what they were doing is also a process for us. Personally, I am the second generation of that project started by my mom. For me, it was about giving value to a dish that one would think is also very easy to replace because of globalization-”¹²⁷

The group welcomed students from the Technological University of Xicotepec who were taught how to make various products, such as jams, vinegar peppers, and shampoo with the purpose of creating alternatives for family’s income, since the group members had to pay off debts. The pepper is sown in terraces through an agroecological production system, without pesticides, through permaculture, with eco-techniques applied to the production process and the promotion of strategic alliances with other social enterprises and organizations that produce different types of sauces. The company, currently called Mopampa, is made up of 13 indigenous Nahuas members. In recent years, they have collected funds from the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI) and the National Institute of Social Development (Indesol).¹²⁸

126. <http://www.slowfood.mx/2017/06/mopampa-empresa-de-economia-social-y-solidaria/>.

127. LAC Women’s focus group. Madrid, June 2018.

128. <http://plenilunia.com/productos/mopampa-chilsec-productos-de-un-proyecto-bicultural-de-mujeres-pensado-para-las-mujeres/34282/>.



6.4. Political advocacy, use of legal proceedings and encouragement of regulations on environmental rights

Throughout the struggle for the acknowledgement of the indigenous peoples' rights in the international sphere, Environmental Justice from the perspective of indigenous peoples has been a central issue. However, despite the significant progress in enacting international and national regulations on environmental rights, in some cases in favor of indigenous peoples, if a survey is done in countries where there are indigenous peoples, it will be found out that most of them show a past and a present history of conflicts and tensions about the quality of legal security of their territories as well as access to natural resources.

Many ancestral territories have not been acknowledged, while others have been invaded, and many indigenous peoples have been continually moving due to low quality lands. This situation resulted in tensions between the extractive economic models and the expansive monoculture and farming, against the traditional community economic model, provoking distancing between cultures and misunderstandings about the ecosystems for the indigenous peoples, as pointed out by one interviewee:

*"We cannot expect the other non-indigenous industries to enact a policy in favor of our development because they have another notion and perspective that is not in accordance with our realities, and is not consistent with our experiences. Therefore, my recommendation as a strategy is to demand the participation of indigenous women of indigenous peoples in the different environmental policies to be established by Governments."*¹²⁹

In the documented advocacy practices and experiences carried out by indigenous women, three types of interrelated activities are basically identified: a) political mobilizations; b) promotion and control of regulations on environmental rights in Human Rights instruments in different areas; and c) use of remedies.

a. Political mobilizations

The indigenous women that were interviewed agreed that their main demands related to Environmental Justice are access and control over natural resources, participation in the formulation of environmental laws and the use of environmental resources.¹³⁰ The experiences of mobilization encouraged by indigenous women show different patterns, in which a series of strategies are combined.

129. Interview R. Madrid, June 2018.

130. Focus group. Southeast Asia Indigenous women. June 2018.



b. Indigenous Women sharing mixed leadership

Several experiences of mobilizations of indigenous peoples have had or have a very visible female leadership. The Arhuaco people¹³¹ in Colombia has maintained an ongoing struggle to raise the National Government's awareness of its requests on nature preservation and territorial rights.

In the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, Colombia, the Kogui, Arhuaco, Wiwa and Kankuamo indigenous peoples live are governed by the Law of Origin, which is not only a legal framework, but a way of life that establishes the reciprocal relationship with nature, and defines the principles of relationship and governance. One of its main demands has been on mining in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta. They have requested the suspension of mining expedition and exploration, the implementation of the Arhuaco People's Safeguards Plan, safekeeping compliance, people's territorial protection law, water protection that benefits surrounding peoples in the highlands, fulfillment of court judgements, among others.

The leader Leonor Zabaleta has played a leading role in the struggle¹³² and has argued that cultures are the pillar for the transformation of humanity and conservation of nature.¹³³ Regarding gender relations in the struggle for Environmental Justice and the role of indigenous women, she said *"there is no issue on inequality but rather recognition of a mission fulfilled by trees just as by the earth itself, by women just as well as men. In our traditions, the earth is the mother and has the ability to produce life for everything that is on it, but this is not possible if there is no protection. What would we do if the land had no vegetation? The mother gives us life, but the trees allow other important things to happen, such as by giving us oxygen."*

With respect to the role of women and the need to assume leadership, she added, *"... A traditional indigenous woman is the one that truly supports that way of being and thinking of those who live in the territory. There are many activities where they are the pillar and apart from raising the children, they also do other artistic, agricultural, even social tasks, in organizational and self-government meetings, and since they are just girls because they are instructed to do so. Women are linked to what is never going to stop being used, for example, knitting, wherever she is walking, she continually goes along knitting, this is part of her life. However, it is necessary that there be women who dedicate themselves to be leaders to include that vision and feeling of the indigenous woman within our political processes and spaces."*¹³⁴

131. El Pilon. <https://elpilon.com.co/arhuacos-mantienen-bloqueo-norte-valledupar/>

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9pemODxw-w>

132. Leonor Zalabeta has participated in the Convension on Biological Diversity of the United Nations in the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network and the work group of the indigenous peoples of the United Nations in Geneva. In 2007, the Prime Minister of Sweden awarded her the International Human Rights Award Anna Lindhs. Source: El Ecologista. 2017

133. El Ecologista. The earth is the mother and is the one with the capacity to give life 1/10/2017 | No. 93.

<https://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/?p=35191>

134. El Ecologista. No. 93, 2017.



In the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, they have combined several strategies, such as appealing the solidarity of social movements and other indigenous peoples, the patriotic parade, the Wayuu people, the National Indigenous Council of Cauca, even of Colombian celebrities¹³⁵, among others; parades which several organizations, including political parties, have participated in and have invited the general public to join them; participation in political negotiations. Leonor Zabaleta said about it: *“Here, the Achilles heel is mining because this is what destroys the environment and nature.”*¹³⁶

In order to occupy leadership positions in mixed organizations, indigenous women have combined the development of abilities with their own organizational strengthening. This is the case of the Indigenous Tacana Women,¹³⁷ who are part of the Indigenous Council of the Tacana People (CIPTA), a mixed organization including both men and women, and which prioritizes in its statute “To encourage the equal participation of men and women in the exercise of functions and projects.” CIPTA, is part of the Central of Paceño Northern People (CPILAP) in the department of La Paz, Bolivia, and is an organization affiliated with CIDOB, which is part of the COICA, which represents the indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin. The CIMTA is part of the Central of Indigenous Women of Bolivia CMIB, an organization that is part of the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB).

In November 2001, at the 2nd Meeting of Tacana Women, the Indigenous Council of Tacana Women (CIMTA) was reorganized prioritizing the following objectives:

- Promote the participation of women in decision-making at the community and TCO Tacana I level;¹³⁸
- Fight to defend the rights of women for them to be respected and heard;
- Work in coordination with CIPTA to improve women’s conditions in the family and the community (education, health, and financial situation); and,
- Support women’s community organizations in order to work and solve problems together.

They defined as their vision that the Tacana Women participate in conditions of equality and knowledge, as well as in decision-making power in organic and representative organizations inside and outside the TCO, while their mission is that CIMTA works jointly with CIPTA in order to empower women and qualify their participation in all fields and areas of knowledge, and the levels of representation.

135. The artist Carlos Vives committed himself to the Mamos Arhuacos of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to send the world a message of preservation of the natural reserve affected by climate change after receiving a request on behalf of the indigenous peoples of the Sierra the Mamo Camilo. http://caracol.com.co/emisora/2018/03/05/santa_marta/1520243158_931050.html.

136. El Ecologista. 2017.

137. AYNI. IIWF. The Tacana Indigenous Women’s Council.

138. The Community Land of Origin of the Tacana people I is located in the municipalities of Ixiamas and San Buenaventura in the province of Abel Iturralde in the Department of La Paz, Bolivia.



In 1997, the CIPTA began the long process of entitlement of their Communal Lands of Origin (TCO). Almost 20 years later, the difficult negotiation process with public authorities, colonizers and businessmen in the area has not finished; a portion of the TCO is still pending a title holder.

Between 2000 and 2002, the CIPTA, with the participation of the CIMTA, elaborated its Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the TCO, whose mandates are framed in managing its territory through the sustainable management of the natural resources, and strengthening the organization in order to legitimately represent its communities before public and private institutions.

The women's organization is encouraging a political advocacy process to increase the inhabitants' expertise, especially that of TCO's women, in the management of natural resources in a sustainable manner and their commitment to the management of their territory, increasing knowledge about climate change, improving the management of natural resources and enhancing the diet by adding new ingredients to it. What they have planned is to have a document for their negotiations with the local governments of Ixiamas and San Buenaventura, ranging from the management of natural resources to the political incidence of the CIMTA in response to climate change.

The strategies applied include to strengthen the indigenous women's organization, to increase their capacities, to empower them economically improving the management processes, to collect and sell products resulting from the management of natural resources and to implement horticultural garden plots to improve family diet, jointly in negotiation with local governments.

c. Impact for mobilization in academic spaces.

At Benguet State University in the Cordillera Region in the Philippines, they were dealing with the fact that indigenous students and teachers were at risk of losing their cultural identity and traditional knowledge. In 2017, they carried out a study called "Challenges for the integration of the system of indigenous knowledge and practices in the tertiary curriculum of Benguet State University," and the findings showed the lack of reference materials (texts, local literature, documentaries, cultural materials, among others); lack of appreciation and pride due to the intergenerational transfer gap (on sacred sites and practices, urban migration, negative connotations of indigenous culture by religious beliefs), limited exposure by teaching staff, identity crisis and lack of institutional policies to incorporate traditional knowledge and gender approach into the curriculum.¹³⁹

Being aware that school is one of the main ways to integrate the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples in order to raise their consciousness about traditional knowledge and gender-based approach, Gygy elaborated an advocacy plan that includes the following activities:

- a) Develop skills for teachers to learn to integrate traditional knowledge and a gender-based perspective in their lesson plans, methodologies, activities and programs;

139. Advocacy plan for GIGY GUMA-AD BANES from the Philippines in the Global Leadership School of the IIFW. Raise Awareness of Indigenous Human Rights to integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) and Gender and Development (GAD) Perspectives in the Institutional Programs/Activities of Benguet State University. 2017.



- b) Organize cultural presentations for students, such as dances, songs, cuisine, crafts and art, with the participation of diverse community players;
- c) Conduct participatory studies on traditional knowledge and gender in order to produce materials on indigenous culture, including topics such as food security, land, resources and environment;
- d) Collect reference materials on the topics; and,
- e) University extension activities such as visits to communities to share results of studies or open forums.

The activities would be announced through social media and informative notes by the people responsible for the departments. They would be included into public university newsletters, and community organizations would be specifically invited. In order to carry out each activity, a coordination team would be formed, which should prepare an activity plan and a monitoring and feedback mechanism, including evaluation sheets distributed among participants at the conclusion of the various activities planned. In order to ensure ethical relationships with the communities, the research findings will be verified before their publication through community activities. The activities would be carried out ensuring the participation of diverse departments of the University (gender, human resources, vice-rectorate, sciences and arts, community organizations, among others).

d. Advocacy to encourage public policies using global processes, agreements, and recommendations as a frame of reference (Sustainable Development Goals, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the UN).

As previously indicated, one of the objectives of the mobilization and advocacy activities encouraged by indigenous women is to participate in the development of national legislation about the environment. In this context, the National Confederation of Indigenous Women of Bolivia, CNAMIB,¹⁴⁰ contemplated to develop a Strategic Action framework for the defense and inclusion of the Human Rights of Indigenous Women of Bolivia in the Agendas of Sustainable Development at local, national and international level. To achieve this, they have implemented a plan to strengthen negotiation and advocacy capacities for indigenous women leaders and complainants who precisely participate in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of sustainable development agendas at the local, national and international levels.

The objective of the advocacy plan is to create empowerment processes for indigenous women and youth in the East, Chaco and Amazon of Bolivia in order to strengthen their organizational, enforceability and advocacy capacities for the defense, inclusion and exercise of their individual and collective Human Rights in the agendas of sustainable development at the local, national and international levels. To this end, they proposed the following:

- Implementing a plan to strengthen negotiation and advocacy abilities for indigenous women leaders and complainants involved in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of sustainable development agendas at the local, national and international levels.

140. AYNÍ- IIWF. 2018.



- Preparing an Integral Development Model for Eastern, Chaco and Amazonian Indigenous Peoples and action plans for the regions of Oriente Chaco and Amazonia from the perspectives of the Sustainable Development Goals and indigenous women.
- Creating spaces for political deliberation and direction of indigenous women's proposals.
- Preparing and Implementing a Communication Plan and spreading information about the 2030 Development Agenda, the participation and inclusion of women and indigenous peoples.

The planned activities for developing the advocacy policy plan include the creation of roundtables for dialogue, coordination, and discussion with government entities and civil society.

Another experience analyzed has been the advocacy plan of a participant in the Global Leadership School of the IWF in Bangladesh,¹⁴¹ a country with a population of 160 million inhabitants, where 50 indigenous peoples and tribes live in 64 districts. The Santals village, which has an estimated population of 202,744 inhabitants, lives in the Rajshahi Division. The Garo People, consisting of 1,020,000 persons, is located in the plain area of the Mymensingh District. Others who live in the highlands are Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sylhet, Chakma, Rakhain, Tripura, Monipuri, Urao, Marma. The access to land is the main factor of violence and, in the case of indigenous peoples – *adibashis* – it takes different forms such as looting or burning of houses, occupation of land by force, organized rape against *adibashi* women by men from powerful groups supported by law enforcement agencies, especially the police and members of the political party in power.

Through the advocacy plan, it was suggested involving complainants at the national level to ensure actions against violations suffered by religious minorities and ensure that representatives of minorities are part of state strategies and policies to empower them and respect their identities.

The expected result is that policymakers protect the territorial rights of indigenous women and their communities, although individual results such as self-protection, development of leadership, communication, negotiation, self-employment through the development of skills, among others, are also expected. The planned activities are consultation meetings, and establishment of a national advocacy and negotiation roundtable, building synergies with other organizations for work development and increased skills among the participants. The consultation meetings aim to involve different players, minority groups, women and men from different parts of the country, with at least 3 or 4 policy makers and with the ability to influence at the national level.

The strategy to be used includes the recommendations of Session XVII of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the UN referring to the collective right to lands, territories and resources; involving the national network of civil society organizations and the Bangladesh Human Rights Alliance.¹⁴² It is expected that through the advocacy process, tribal women can be provided with a platform for them to increase their understanding of the culture of peace, intercultural dialogue

141. Shapla Swarna Ruram Indigenous Women Rights Activist and Leader Human Rights Officer, BCHR, advocacy plan, Promoting of UNPFII Indigenous peoples' collective rights in Bangladesh.

142. Global Human Rights Defensa (GHRD), BCHR have created the Human Rights Alliance of Bangladesh (HRAB) to mainstream the issues of marginalized peoples and groups in Bangladesh.



that they can use in their own contexts, and disseminate information through the network of women's organizations of the civil society.

e. Advocacy through the revitalization and encouragement of Indigenous traditional medicine in health policies.

In Paraguay, ¹⁴³Margarita, Ache People, who works as a health promoter of her Koetuwu community and supports community work such as production of yerba mate and cultivation of other organic foods, suggests —as a participant in the Global Leadership School— an advocacy plan, with the objective that all Aché women can have more intercultural knowledge about the use of medicinal plants, as well as knowledge of their own culture. The objective is to move towards medicinal sovereignty due to the lack of medicines in public institutions.

The activities included in the advocacy plan gathering ancestral knowledge from Ache grandmothers and grandparents, knowledge about the medicinal herbs currently used by the Ava Guaraní and Mbya Guaraní peoples. Subsequently, it is suggested to systematize traditional knowledge, train in the use of medicinal plants, establish a community pharmacy, practice socialization activities with communities, teachers, students, record medicinal properties, audiovisual record, edition and publication of a book containing the systematized material.

f. Use of legal remedies

As pointed out by one of the interviewees, Environmental Justice implies the possibility that people can go through the jurisdictional path to request environmental protection, “if there is no way or mechanism about how to defend the environment, natural resources or animals, we would be affecting ourselves. It seems to me that, at present, the struggle is mostly leaning on indigenous women who are part of the demands precisely in defense of the environment or natural resources. Unfortunately, indigenous women, when they are facing this struggle put their lives at risk.” ¹⁴⁴

One issue which one of the interviewees referred to took place in Oaxaca,¹⁴⁵ where different areas of the population were organized and through the Civil Association of Strategic Indigenous Litigation (LEI) submitted an issue before the jurisdictional bodies so that the right to the environment set forth in Article 4 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States and in international treaties signed by Mexico are taken into account to ecologically restore and clean up the pollution of the Atoyac and Salado rivers that cross the city of Oaxaca and its suburban areas.

143. Margarita Mbywangy from the People. Project in the community of Koetuwu. Medicinal garden and restoration of traditional knowledge. Margarita was born in the Koetuwu community. She was kidnapped by non-indigenous persons at age five who had her until age 20 as a maid. At age 20, around 1980, she reunited with her family. Since then, she has been working on behalf of her people, carrying out several collective projects. She was the first Aché woman to become a leader of her community and of the Aché people. She launched a run for the Senate in the 2009 elections with the Guasu Front. She did not get elected, but during the term of President Lugo, she presided over the Instituto Paraguayo del Indígena, being the first and only indigenous person to occupy the position. She is currently president of the Association of Ache ACA Communities, and works as a health promoter for her community Koetuwu and supports different community jobs such as yerba mate production and other food crops, all of them organic.

144. Reynaldo Mareo Vásquez Ramírez. Legal expert from Chol de Chiapas in México.

145. LAC Indigenous Women's Focus Group. June 2018.



They were based on the constitutional reform dated June 10, 2011 and the Amparo Law dated 2013 as references. Four years later, the judgment of the National Supreme Court of Justice (SCJN) stated that the responsible authorities had failed to adopt all of the measures at their disposal and demanded that the Government take all of necessary actions to agree on –with the federal government through the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the local authorities– environmental protection measures, specifically with respect to the sewage dumping to riverbeds. It also orders the execution of actions for the conservation, restoration and monitoring of the ecological balance, as well as environmental protection.

Likewise, it orders that the perpetrators carry out cleaning programs in the abovementioned rivers, as well as the performance and operation of infrastructure and services necessary for preventing and monitoring pollution and improvement of water quality in the Atoyac and Salado rivers.¹⁴⁶

One interviewee said: “what needs to be done is working on legal mechanisms, including public policies to defend the environment and, of course, reformulate strategies, which might be through legislative or legal measures allowing people, either individually or collectively, to activate a procedural mechanism to defend the environment or other related mechanism; through public policy to specifically strengthen environmental policy. Of course, international instruments are important allies for us, especially the international law that should be taken as a reference for environmental defense and the other rights that are directly related to health, biodiversity, and other related rights.”¹⁴⁷

146 INVI Noticias. Ivonne Mateo, 05/12/2018

147 Interview R.V. June 2018.



7. Conclusions



The growing discussion in the world about the climate changes and impacts in the local communities included the discussion on the importance of the peoples having access to Environmental Justice. The definition of an Environmental Justice concept is linked to a legal view, being aware that all of the communities on the planet have the right to live in a healthy environment that can be the basis for the comprehensive development of their cultures. Even so, the initial discussions were related to ethnic groups that identified the limitations to living in healthy environments and the impacts as part of the structural discrimination in which the poorest communities live in many countries.

When we talk about Environmental Justice, we see the intrinsic relationship with environmental injustice or even environmental violence, as identified by women and indigenous peoples. Before going a step further in the discussion on Environmental Justice, it is necessary to point out that indigenous peoples and especially indigenous women have one of the lowest impacts on the carbon footprint in the planet, which means that the pollution we generate on the environment is one of the lowest, and there is clear evidence of the relationship between indigenous peoples and environmental conservation. By taking a map and observing the most biologically diverse areas in the world, we can see that these are the same territories where indigenous peoples have lived in a traditional way. However, in the face of growing climate changes, they are the most affected groups, in their livelihoods, diets, worldview and governance structures.

The concept of Environmental Justice is a foreign concept to the cultures of indigenous peoples, but it has been adapted to their reality and the search for that environmental balance driven by external complainants. Indigenous women have identified that the imbalance in their territories has been created by extractive industries, which foment conflicts, environmental and cultural imbalances, and incite violence in their territories, natural environments, natural resources, and in their bodies. Indigenous women are identified as the caretakers of Mother Earth, so what impacts upon it are also impacts upon indigenous women, and therefore these are negative impacts against all indigenous peoples.

The Indigenous Women struggle for Environmental Justice is seen from the perspective of the importance of the indigenous peoples' collective rights. However, being aware that climate injustices or environmental violence affects men and women differently, the issue of a people's collective rights is identified as the support for women's rights. It is understood that environmental injustices have an impact not only on the individuals, but also on a whole people. An indigenous leader from Thailand said: "Ahow Kow Pur Thor Krow Rea Rea": We survive on the Earth; we have to preserve our mother's land.



In this context, Indigenous Women link the concept of Environmental Justice with the certainty that, as women and indigenous peoples, they should fully enjoy the right to health, dignity, culture, life, a healthy and safe environment, as well as clean and healthy food. In the interviews conducted throughout the study, it was reaffirmed that their peoples enjoy the inherent right to have clean water, air, land, and food and that many of them have traditional knowledge and practices to manage these resources.

Throughout this study, we have seen that there are different climatic impacts on the territories of indigenous peoples, such as the decrease in reindeer herds due to pollution and climate change in northern Russia and Scandinavia that affects the European indigenous people, that is an entire people's livelihood. In Africa, the incursion by large extractive industries seeking access to primary resources — or even by conservationist organizations — has had great impacts on the lives of nomadic indigenous communities, not only restricting their access to territories where they traditionally obtained their food, but also the breaking up of the indigenous social cohesion and the passing on of traditional wisdom and knowledge. So, the impacts and dilemmas in terms of cultural survival are similar to other indigenous peoples in the world. Similar challenges identified in this study include the fact that legal security is necessary for responsible governance; without legal security, it is more difficult for indigenous peoples and women to participate in self-determination processes and it is more difficult to fight for Environmental Justice.

An important challenge is to identify the occasional interests of external complainants in indigenous territories. These complainants are not only large extraction companies, but also non-governmental organizations which, in the name of the conservation of natural spaces, violate the rights of indigenous peoples, dislodging them from the lands they have ancestrally inhabited. In these kind of actions, territorial defense by indigenous women has resulted in a criminalization of territorial and environmental struggles. In many countries, national regulations have been applied to prohibit or prosecute protests and social struggles of indigenous peoples. The violation of indigenous peoples' rights extends to harassment, threats and even death of defenders of the indigenous peoples' rights. This is an alarming global phenomenon, and it is one more element in the environmental violence that indigenous women are dealing with in the world. Therefore, it is important to continue raising our voices so that the Governments and multinational corporations put an end to the criminalization, incarceration, intimidation, coercion, death threats, and murders of defenders of indigenous and environmental rights.

In terms of climate justice, indigenous women consider that it is important to include the human and non-human sphere in the discussion, where the linking of economic, extractive and environmental changes —which are the basis of power inequalities— be reflected. In the discussion of Environmental Justice, it must be taken as a basis that the sovereignty and autonomy derived from our lands, territories and resources are closely related to the sovereignty and autonomy derived from our bodies, minds and spirits. We have seen that, as a result of the introduction of extractive industries (mining, oil extraction, logging, etc.), the exploitation and sexual violence inflicted on indigenous women and girls in many communities has increased, as well as drug abuse and alcohol, sexually transmitted infections, divisions within our families and communities, and a whole series of social and health problems.



Indigenous Women acknowledge the impacts and tragedies of environmental violence on their communities and territories, but also highlight the importance of strategies to move forward, which makes them resilient. Throughout the different experiences documented during the study, it is clear that indigenous women are active complainants within their environments that struggle to break away from environmental violence and disclose experiences that have already been taking place so as to achieve Environmental Justice in their territories and their bodies. A key aspect is the traditional indigenous knowledge used in different strategies and practices in order to achieve such Environmental Justice. Therefore, in several interviews, a common aspect defined by women is the importance of strengthening this traditional knowledge to strengthen the culture, thinking about the children's future well-being so that they can live in a healthy environment.

Participation in advocacy proceedings must be essential in order to promote actions in favor of environmental protection, in conjunction with sustainable development practices and food production enabling us to reduce the social, environmental and cultural injustice gaps in which women are caught up.

Practices and strategies ranging from local advocacy actions through the strengthening of organizations and participation of indigenous women in territorial governance processes, strengthening traditional governance institutions were identified, as well as raising awareness for the inclusion of women in these spaces; such actions proved to have a positive impact on indigenous territorial security. Other advocacy processes are related to partnerships with others in terms of working together with other organizations, which resulted in rewarding learning at local levels, like in the case of the Wangki Tangni women's organization in Nicaragua, where different complainants of civil society organizations, international networks, and government institutions are incorporated to work with women in order to break away from environmental and gender violence in their communities. On the other hand, the global impact experiences with the Elatia network, which includes rewarding experiences around the world useful to establish spaces for collective learning and look for solutions from different approaches to climate violence.

Other practices identified are related to the communication, the spreading of our messages and voices of indigenous women. It was seen through local and global campaigns, contests and the presentation of indigenous women leaders about their experiences. It causes the national or international interest to focus on the causes of struggle for climate justice by indigenous women. This call for attention has also had an impact on the identification and acknowledgement of the importance of indigenous rights-promoting women who have received awards related to their work in favor of Environmental Justice.

Another indigenous women's strategy is the encouragement and practice of healing to achieve good living. Healing is understood as the balance between the interrelation of spiritual elements, human beings and nature. Indigenous peoples use these rituals in different aspects of their daily lives, and show the importance that has always been given to the recognition of tangible and intangible resources in our cultures.



Therefore, the work to strengthen the culture and traditional knowledge to achieve Environmental Justice is key for them, thinking about the future wellbeing of the sons and daughters so that they can be born healthy and in a clean environment, where women can promote healing processes from the peoples and Mother Earth, strengthening culture and rights. Our Peoples have the necessary knowledge to heal us. Although many diseases caused by the effects of colonization might have to be treated with Western medicine, we know that our own traditional knowledge and healing practices, passed down by our grandparents and grandmothers, are essential for the healing of our peoples and our Mother Earth. Healing rituals are an integral part of indigenous peoples' worldview, and are a communal institution integrated in some countries as a practice within the structures of traditional governance spaces. These healing spaces are usually of an individual, family and community collective nature.

These healing processes are intimately linked with processes of cultural revitalization and strengthening carried out through an approach to revitalize indigenous production and food systems, and the recovery not only of types or ways for food preparation, but also systems of indigenous reciprocity for agricultural production, fishing, hunting or re-selection of non-timber forest products. In these processes, women have had an essential and leading role, like their participation in the diversification of seeds or the search for added value and participation in fairer markets.

It is important to note that the strategies developed by indigenous women against climate injustice, which in addition to their variety, are creative, too. Indigenous women have found other spaces within those traditionally used for having influence. This is a challenge, and at the same time has been a positive aspect. It represents the creation of a mixed leadership within indigenous organizations, where both men and women, work together to address environmental issues and seek solutions that include broader and comprehensive perspectives. Regarding public policies, advocacy has involved creating policies that respond to the reality of the indigenous peoples' needs, while indigenous women have been trained in environmental, health, and educational issues that are comprehensive aspects for the construction of a healthy environment leading to climate justice and the good living of peoples.

Protecting our health, lands and resources, including air, water, languages, cultures, traditional foods, and types of subsistence, sovereignty, self-determination and the transmission of our traditional knowledge and teachings to future generations, are inherent and inalienable Human Rights. These rights are ratified in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in other international regulations, and consequently in the Governments (countries) and their territories, as well as United Nations agencies, corporations, and Indigenous Peoples.



The defense of the territory and the search for Environmental Justice for indigenous women can not be separated from the struggle for the recognition and respect of the collective rights of the peoples to which they belong. Environmental Justice is for indigenous women a concept that must be seen from the field of rights; therefore, it can not be seen separately as a group of women within indigenous communities, since it encompasses and transcends a series of elements indispensable for the good living and the cultural reproduction of the peoples. In this regard, the propagation of indigenous traditional wisdom and knowledge is an important strategy in order to safeguard culture, territory, our environment, and thus achieve Environmental Justice.

8. Recommendations

- We urge Governments to make investments so as to help mitigate climate change in indigenous territories, including a strong participation component of local complainants as an active part in the processes of defining and administrating actions, and not just as simple beneficiaries. The projects must be applied from a Human Rights approach, enabling the creation of spaces for intergenerational dialogue and a holistic and integral approach, respecting and applying the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples.
- It is requested that any national or international proceeding, related to indigenous peoples, respect the traditional knowledge of indigenous women in terms of development, environmental protection, cultural practices, food production and health; and that their full and effective participation as leaders and experts at all decision-making levels of respect to these issues is encouraged and promoted.
- We demand putting an immediate end to criminalization, incarceration, any type of intimidation, coercion, death threats, and the murder of all defenders of indigenous and environmental rights.
- Governments are urged to take measures to eliminate discrimination against the health of indigenous women and their birthing practices, as well as traditional midwifery techniques; and to respect the use of knowledge of traditional medicines in the same way as other health systems and methods, including the right of male and female indigenous healers to protect, apply and share their traditional knowledge in the way they decide to do so.
- It is necessary that the academic sector and researchers of Human Rights and the Environment, make it possible so that indigenous peoples can document cases of environmental violence, including sexual assaults, trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation, the disappearance and murders of women and indigenous girls, directly resulting from the influx of extractive mining, oil, hydraulic fracturing (fracking), lumber, and other industries. It is necessary that not only individual abusers be held accountable, but also that national and international companies respond to justice both in the countries and in international processes in order to end impunity.
- We will continue taking actions to educate our peoples about the existing relationship between reproductive health and environmental pollution, as well as their Human Rights, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the treaties among nations and other international regulations.



- We will continue working in order to train affected women and girls and strengthen their abilities, as well as other members of the community in the documentation and support their experiences and impacts due to environmental violence in order to hold Governments accountable for the resulting damages, prejudices, and violations of rights.
- It is necessary to include in our work the participation, experiences, and challenges of indigenous people with disabilities, as well as gathering additional information to document the link between disabilities and certain diseases, and prenatal exposure to toxic substances in their territories.
- Governments are urged to fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially those articles related to the protection of their environment (Article 29) and the obligation of Governments to guarantee FPIC in relation to hazardous materials (Art. 32), as well as the application of FPIC related to development activities in our lands (Art. 20, 23, 24, 31).
- We call on the Governments to eliminate the production, import, and use of pesticides, industrial chemicals, and toxic byproducts that alter the endocrine system and trigger various types of cancer in the reproductive system, affecting the welfare of the future generations in our lands and territories.
- We also request the Governments and companies assume their responsibility and commitment to effectively and immediately clean, and in collaboration and coordination with affected indigenous peoples, the polluted areas as a result of activities that were allowed or authorized, in accordance with the recommendations that the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination have been issued to various Governments.
- We request the Governments provide transparent, responsible, and ongoing dialogues with the indigenous peoples concerning the rights to lands and territories —in relation to environmental and reproductive health as Human Rights— and engage the private industry when necessary.
- It is necessary that the United Nations system has a stronger monitoring and supervision process in the application of the recommendations issued by the relevant treaties, and periodically monitor the guiding principles on business and Human Rights regarding their obligations to control the activities of the companies whom they license, and ensure that they do not threaten and violate the Human Rights of indigenous peoples.
- The Special Rapporteurs of the United Nations and other holders of Human Rights mandates, bodies, agencies and processes shall coordinate efforts to address health and environmental violence, as overlapping issues that affect various processes and mandates of the United Nations, including the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; health, women, children, environment,



food sovereignty/security, land and resources, and female and male Human Rights defenders, among others.

- We urge the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to focus on the relationship among the causes and impacts of climate change and pollution with toxic substances from land, ecosystems, traditional food systems, and bodies of indigenous persons and people.
- The United Nations Organization has to sort out the Agriculture and Food (FAO) and grant the request of the indigenous peoples and the President of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues to review the code of conduct of this organization on pesticides in order to include the right to free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples are affected by pesticides and other forms of pollution.
- It is requested that the investigations carried out in the territory of indigenous peoples be based on protocols of collaboration defined by the indigenous peoples, and the scientific and academic industries are urged to support these criteria of collaboration and non-manipulation.
- It is necessary to devote resources to support traditional methods of cultivation and production of food, including the acknowledgement of food sovereignty zones of indigenous peoples; and stop megaprojects and activities that exploit the seeds and crops of indigenous peoples, as well as those that encourage the use of chemical products for agriculture and genetically modified organisms that pollute the waters and lands of indigenous peoples.
- It is necessary for Indigenous Peoples to establish monitoring and follow-up mechanisms in order to measure compliance by Governments with the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including rights related to intergenerational health, accountability of companies, governments and environmental protection.
- Indigenous Women acknowledge, in each of our struggles, traditional knowledge, as well as our spirit of warriors and cultural and territorial safeguards, accepting our work to defend our Mother Earth, our children and future generations. This is the time to stop environmental violence and rebuild our healthy environment, where our cultures and traditions are the basis of our development and that they survive in the future.

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