



STRATEGY

2026-2031

Promoting and defending Indigenous Peoples' rights

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Cover photo: Two Mro women during a communal gathering. CREDIT: *Arnab Dewan / IWGIA*

This page: CREDIT: *Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA*

INTRODUCTION

We live in a time of profound global transformation. The world today is marked by escalating climate crises, deepening inequalities, and increasing threats to human rights and democratic values. In this shifting landscape, Indigenous Peoples continue to face systemic marginalisation, land dispossession, and violence, yet they also stand at the forefront of global efforts to protect biodiversity, uphold cultural diversity, and promote sustainable futures.

IWGIA has stood as a steadfast ally to Indigenous Peoples across the globe for more than five decades. Our work has always been guided by the priorities and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples, rooted in solidarity, trust, and mutual respect. We have consistently advocated for the rights, voices, and leadership of Indigenous Peoples, from supporting Indigenous Peoples' own organisations on the ground to influencing international policy. Our work is rooted in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 and we will celebrate its 20th anniversary during this strategic period. The declaration's three principal pillars: the right to self-determination, land rights, and cultural rights, as well as the UN frameworks on climate change and biodiversity, are central to our work and that of our partners.

Over the years, IWGIA has grown not only in size but also in scope and reach. We have expanded our partnerships, deepened our expertise, and strengthened our presence in key global arenas. This growth reflects both the increasing urgency of our mission and the trust placed in us by Indigenous partners and allies worldwide.

"IWGIA has stood as a steadfast ally to Indigenous Peoples across the globe for more than five decades."

Indigenous women in Meriloshio Indigenous women village, Isiolo County, Kenya.

CREDIT: Geneviève Rose / IWGIA



OUR STRATEGY STRUCTURE

The first part of the strategy describes **Who We Are**, which is deeply rooted in our vision and mission, our values that we use to guide us in all our relations (internally and with our partners and allies), and the added value we can bring to the Indigenous Peoples' movements and our partners, which shapes our work principles.

Our **Theory of Change** describes how we work and how we want to achieve change with respect to the core challenges that we identify. It is informed by our work principles and, through our thematic priorities and instruments of change, it lays out our methods to achieve our mission and, ultimately, our vision.

As we have adapted over the years to new realities globally and at the community level, we have identified four **thematic priorities** for this strategic period to achieve tangible impacts: 1) Human Rights Systems, 2) Climate and Biodiversity, 3) Land Defence and Territorial Governance, 4) Indigenous Women and persons with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC). These thematic priorities are further described and discussed in this strategy.

Misak community members from the Guambia reserve working on the construction of an aqueduct, supported by the small grants from the Indigenous Navigator.

CREDIT: Nikita Bulanin / IWGIA



IWGIA has identified five **commitments** that reflect the biggest challenges and opportunities that IWGIA will engage in over the next 6 years: 1) We will work to safeguard and reinforce international human rights systems while contributing to a strong, unified global Indigenous movement; 2) We will contribute to ensuring that Indigenous voices and knowledge systems remain central in shaping global, regional, and national policies, with a strong vision of the global Indigenous movement; 3) We will further enhance our agility and deepen our partnerships by providing more direct and responsive support to Indigenous organisations and institutions at all levels; 4) We will engage with the implications of artificial intelligence and promote inclusive, rights-based digital democracies, given the rapid transformations driven by technology; and 5) We will support Indigenous Peoples in urban areas, with a particular focus on youth, and in the diaspora by tackling systemic barriers, amplifying Indigenous voices, and promoting the effective enjoyment of individual and collective rights.

WALKING ALONGSIDE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

This new strategy sets out our roadmap to ensuring that IWGIA remains a strong, responsive, and effective partner to Indigenous Peoples everywhere.

The strategy will be accompanied by a Key Implementation Plan with clear targets and indicators, as well as by complementary engagement and fundraising strategies.

As we look to the years ahead, we remain guided by a simple but profound principle: Indigenous Peoples are rights-holders and central actors in shaping sustainable, just, and inclusive futures. Our role is to continue walking alongside them, in solidarity during urgent struggles and in support of long-term transformations, so that their rights, dignity, and sovereignty are realised.

Together, with our partners, we reaffirm our commitment to a world where Indigenous Peoples' rights are respected and protected, their voices are heard, and their contributions are fully recognised.

"Indigenous Peoples are rights-holders and central actors in shaping sustainable, just and inclusive futures."

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Indigenous Peoples make up approximately **6% of the world's population**, or around **476 million** people worldwide. Indigenous Peoples manage a significant portion of the world's land surface and maintain enduring connections to their lands, territories and resources. More than **5,000 distinct Indigenous Peoples** worldwide are believed to exist, speaking some **4,000 different languages** and living in more than **90 countries** (UN, 2023).¹ Despite the richness of their cultures, and of their lands, and despite the crucial role Indigenous Peoples play in protecting these, they make up more than 18% of the world's extreme poor.²

Given the diversity of Indigenous Peoples, an official definition of "Indigenous Peoples" has not been adopted by the UN system. Instead, a working definition has been accepted under international law to include the following criteria: self-identification as Indigenous Peoples; historical continuity; strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; distinct social, economic or political systems; distinct language, culture and beliefs; they form non-dominant groups in society; and they are resolved to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.

Indigenous Peoples' rights are recognised in ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, established in 1989, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. The adoption of the UNDRIP was an historic achievement in the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights at the international level. Since then, international jurisprudence has increasingly affirmed these rights, with regional and international human rights bodies referencing UNDRIP and ILO 169 in their decisions.

1. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Policy Brief No. 151. "Why Indigenous languages matter: The International Decade of Indigenous languages 2022-2032." Feb 2023. <https://social.desa.un.org/publications/why-indigenous-languages-matter-the-international-decade-on-indigenous-languages-2022>
2. International Labour Organization. "Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future." 2019. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/implementing-ilo-indigenous-and-tribal-peoples-convention-no-169-towards>

Macheteros performing a traditional dance during a community celebration in San José, Multiethnic Indigenous Territory (TIM), Bolivian Amazon. CREDIT: Pedro Laguna / ORE



WHO WE ARE

IWGIA is an international human rights organisation, founded in 1968, that has partnered with Indigenous Peoples in their struggles for rights, recognition, and dignity for nearly six decades. We will celebrate our 60th anniversary during this strategic period in 2028. We started as a small group of academics turned activists, determined to bring global attention to the realities of Indigenous Peoples. We have grown into a trusted and steadfast ally and partner of Indigenous Peoples' organisations, movements, and networks across all seven socio-cultural regions.

TRUST, HONESTY AND RESPECT

Indigenous Peoples are the experts on their own lives and issues. We recognise this unique expertise and seek to build our knowledge from our engagement and partnership with Indigenous Peoples. IWGIA respects the priorities of Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of their right to self-determination. We believe that, through intercultural dialogue, we develop a deeper understanding of the diverse perspectives and practices of Indigenous Peoples. Honesty, engagement and openness guide our work to ensure credibility and build trust. We undertake to be guided by an understanding of the power and privileges we bring into every relationship within IWGIA as well as with partners and others, providing equal opportunities for all.

INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Our work is grounded in professional expertise and in-depth knowledge of Indigenous Peoples' rights and their cultures. We value, respect and celebrate diversity of experience, competencies, culture, ideas, and opinions among our staff and partners.

OUR VISION

IWGIA's vision is a world in which Indigenous Peoples everywhere fully exercise and enjoy their inherent and internationally-recognised rights and promote their visions for well-being.

OUR MISSION

IWGIA's mission towards this vision is to promote and defend Indigenous Peoples' collective and individual rights, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.

OUR VALUES

Our values are our guiding principles that shape our actions, decisions, and behaviour, as well as our relations and interactions, both internally and externally with our partners and allies.

We are committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and safe environment where everyone takes responsibility for supporting one another and creating opportunities to reach our fullest potential. We promote joyfulness in co-creation through an environment that encourages learning, transparency, and inclusion.

INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We act responsibly and hold ourselves accountable for our decisions, actions and their consequences. All our work is based on full financial accountability and transparency. Our work is unbiased and uncompromised by partisan politics, institutional or personal allegiances, and our agenda is not determined by sources of financial support. We do not interfere with Indigenous Peoples' diverse political stands.

INTERSECTIONALITY

At IWGIA, we recognise that Indigenous Peoples experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including those based on gender, status, class, ability, age, sexual orientation, and more. We are committed to applying an intersectional approach in all our work, striving to understand and address how these overlapping forms of discrimination impact Indigenous Peoples both individually and collectively. Upholding the principles of self-determination, non-discrimination, inclusion, and care is central to our mission. We maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards abuse, harassment, discrimination, and exploitation in all their forms.

HOW WE WORK

IWGIA is an ally of and support organisation to Indigenous Peoples and their movements and institutions. It is therefore of utmost importance to us to always be clear about the value that we can bring as a responsible ally and partner. This section of the strategy defines the principles that we use in our work to achieve our mission and ambition.

Partnerships are the foundation of our work. Over time, we have seen how our long-term, consistent relationships have grown into strategic alliances that have contributed to shaping the global Indigenous rights architecture. In the late 1990s, as Indigenous leaders advanced negotiations that led to the creation of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) (2000) and the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007), IWGIA provided information, networks, and advocacy platforms that helped to strengthen their collective strategy and amplify their advocacy efforts. When Indigenous organisations in the Amazon sought to expose the costs of extractive industries, we created spaces for their testimonies to reach governments, investors, and human rights institutions. That same model of facilitation continues today, from supporting Indigenous partners in bringing cases before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to partnering with Indigenous women's organisations confronting restrictive laws. These long-term, trust-based partnerships with a wide range of Indigenous Peoples' organisations, UN and regional human rights institutions and other allies, remain the core of our legitimacy and effectiveness. More than 2/3 of our project resources are re-granted directly to Indigenous organisations, institutions and governments, reflecting both our accountability and direct support of our partners.

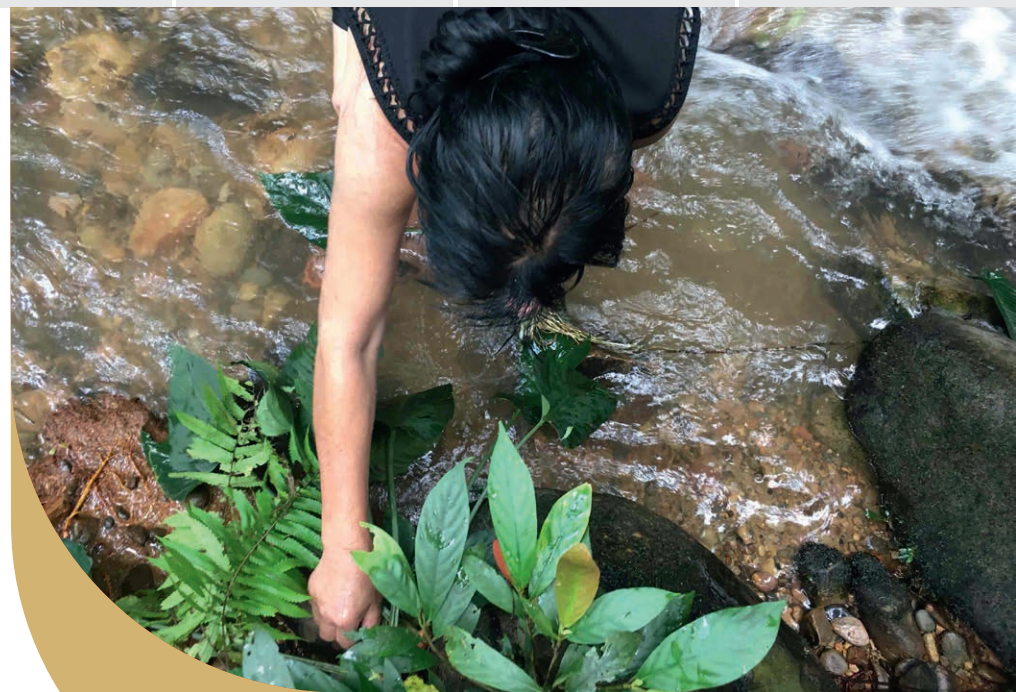
IWGIA and partners at COP16 in Cali, Colombia. CREDIT: IWGIA



Our approach is firmly grounded in **human rights**. We work with the full range of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, placing special emphasis on the collective aspects of these rights while also recognising the importance of the individual rights of Indigenous people. We view Indigenous Peoples as rights-holders whose inherent rights are recognised in international law. This principle drives, for example, our support for Indigenous youth in Latin America who are advancing climate justice, for women in Asia documenting displacement and violence, for pastoralist communities in Africa defending land and resource rights and for data collection on the implementation of the UNDRIP in the Arctic. We emphasise the collective dimensions of rights, lands, territories, governance, and culture while also recognising intersecting vulnerabilities faced by women, youth, and other marginalised groups. For IWGIA, the right to self-determination is not an abstract commitment but a practical reality: the right of Indigenous Peoples to shape their own political, social, and cultural futures.

Members of Ogiek elders advocating and calling for the implementation of the African Court ruling.

CREDIT: Pedro Laguna / OPDP



Jinia from the Dusun people on the upper Papar River, a rich and biodiverse area in Malaysia, is collecting plants for lunch along the river. The government is planning to build a dam that will flood 9 villages, including Jinia's and destroy the current ecosystem.

CREDIT: Helle Løvsta Severinsen / IWGIA

Our strength lies in linking **local struggles with global influence** and ensuring that international gains deliver concrete impact on the ground. When a community in Latin America faces threats to its land, our first step is to support their locally-driven response. From there, we help connect their struggle to regional human rights mechanisms and, if needed, elevate it further to the UN system. The outcomes, whether stronger legal protections or international pressure, are then brought back to the community to reinforce their local struggle. In this way, global advocacy becomes meaningful at the local level, and local realities inform global policy. This capacity to bridge grassroots movements with international mechanisms remains one of our most strategic assets.

Operating in today's world requires **adaptability and agility**. We believe in responding swiftly, decisively and strategically to opportunities, challenges, emergencies, and other fast-developing situations. We work on issues and in places where we and our partners can respond quickly and make an important difference, contributing to improvements in the human rights situation of Indigenous Peoples and individuals. When Indigenous defenders face sudden crackdowns, our ability to rapidly document violations and mobilise support helps bring urgent attention to their situation. When the political context in a country changes, we act and provide the support our partners need to react to new realities and challenges. This responsiveness is made possible by the trust and relationships built over decades, as well as our ability to combine long-term commitments with the flexibility to act when opportunities or threats arise unexpectedly.

Our governance and internal structure mirror these principles. IWGIA is led by an international Board that strives to have a majority of Indigenous members, reflecting our belief that legitimacy must flow from Indigenous voices themselves. Our team, coming from diverse backgrounds and experiences, is expanding into the regions to be closer to our partners and ensure our support is not distant but deeply embedded in local realities. Through our global network of experts, activists, and academics, we bring together knowledge and strategies that strengthen Indigenous Peoples' own visions for the future. Being based in the European Union provides us with the possibility of engaging with important stakeholders in this part of the world and influencing European processes that may affect Indigenous Peoples globally, including interactions with governments, the private sector, larger NGOs, and other stakeholders.





“Through our global network of experts, activists, and academics, we bring together knowledge and strategies that strengthen Indigenous Peoples' own visions for the future.”

Environmental monitor of the Achuar people, from the Olaya community. CREDIT: Alejandro Parellada / IWGIA



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Our theory of change describes how we want to achieve change in the challenges that we identify, informed by our thematic priorities and through our instruments of change, in order to achieve our mission and, ultimately, our vision. It is illustrated in the figure on the next page. The red circle represents our instruments of change and the multi-coloured circle represents our **thematic priorities**:

-  Climate and Biodiversity
-  Land Defence and Territorial Governance
-  Human Rights Systems
-  Indigenous Women and Persons with Diverse SOGIESC

INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE



Documentation

We document, produce and analyse data on the situation of Indigenous Peoples, the human rights violations they experience, the successes they have achieved in the struggles for their rights, and the unique knowledge and contributions they have to address current global challenges.



Advocacy






We advocate for Indigenous Peoples' rights and their implementation at local, national and international levels.



Direct Support

We directly support Indigenous Peoples, their movements, organisations and institutions, in asserting their rights based on their own priorities.

CHALLENGES

-  Political obstruction, underfunding, attempts to redefine or dilute established human rights norms.
-  Rising authoritarianism, shrinking civic space, weak multilateral cooperation.
-  Land dispossession, conflict, violence, criminalization, harassment.
-  Gender-based violence, systemic discrimination.
-  Disproportionate impact of climate change and biodiversity loss, top-down mitigation and adaptation.

Land Defence and Territorial Governance: Several Indigenous Peoples have succeeded in defending and reclaiming their territories. In many cases, they have been able to strengthen their autonomous governance systems and develop strong mechanisms for sustainable land management. However, land dispossession continues at an alarming rate. Displacement, militarisation, and conflict, places Indigenous leaders at the frontline of violence and repression. Many Indigenous Human Rights Defenders continue to be murdered, harassed or disappeared. Under this thematic priority, among other strategic actions, IWGIA will support communities to assert their rights to land, territories, and resources, and to strengthen autonomous governance systems in a safer way.



A world in which Indigenous Peoples everywhere fully exercise and enjoy their inherent and internationally-recognised rights and promote their visions for well-being.

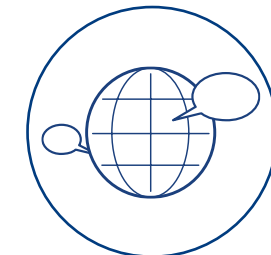
Our vision



Climate and Biodiversity: Indigenous Peoples, who live in highly sensitive biomes, are among the first to face the devastating consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss. Indigenous Peoples' central role in protecting ecosystems, biodiversity and vital carbon sinks is increasingly becoming recognised but more needs to be done. Under this thematic priority, among other strategic actions, IWGIA will support the leadership and meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples, as rights-holders and agents of change in climate and biodiversity governance across national, sub-national, regional and international platforms.



Human Rights Systems: Over the past decades of struggle, many Indigenous Peoples have secured significant gains, emerging as powerful agents of change, building robust organisations that represent and mobilise their communities in international and regional arena. However, the international human rights system is under growing strain. Under this thematic priority, among other strategic actions, IWGIA will safeguard hard-won gains and counter efforts to erode Indigenous Peoples' rights.



Our Mission

Promote and defend Indigenous Peoples' collective and individual rights, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.



Indigenous Women and Persons with Diverse SOGIESC: Gender-based violence and systemic discrimination remain serious challenges for Indigenous women and persons with diverse SOGIESC. They face overlapping forms of marginalisation, violence and human rights violations. Despite this, Indigenous women have been instrumental in building alliances, leading community mobilisation, and shaping international advocacy. Under this thematic priority, among other strategic actions, IWGIA will advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and Indigenous persons with diverse SOGIESC.

OUR INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE

Our instruments of change are tools that we use to actively bring the change we want to achieve within each of our thematic priorities. We foster change through documentation, advocacy, and direct support.



DOCUMENTATION: We document the situation of Indigenous Peoples and the human rights violations they experience. We document lessons learned about Indigenous Peoples' strategies, actions and the successes they have achieved in the struggles for their rights. We document Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and their contributions to addressing current challenges. We produce and analyse data on the situation of Indigenous Peoples and the implementation of their rights.



ADVOCACY: We advocate for change at local, national and international levels. We advocate for Indigenous Peoples' rights and their implementation at all levels. We facilitate the exchange of experiences and strategies on advocacy between Indigenous Peoples' organisations and institutions within countries, regions and internationally. We share information and knowledge on Indigenous Peoples' rights and strategies.



DIRECT SUPPORT: We directly support Indigenous Peoples in asserting their rights. We support Indigenous Peoples' movements, organisations and institutions through direct access to finance and technical support, based on their own priorities.

HOW WE FOSTER CHANGE THROUGH THE INDIGENOUS NAVIGATOR

Documentation: The Indigenous Navigator is a tool created *by and for* Indigenous Peoples to collect and share data on their rights, needs, and development. Using standardised surveys, communities gather reliable data – learning about their rights and becoming agents of change. The data is stored in an interactive online portal that features not only data but also stories, photos, and videos from the communities themselves.

Advocacy: The data are used to engage governments, UN agencies, civil society, and others in order to raise awareness, shape policies, and ensure accountability. They are used by communities to drive evidence-based advocacy that pushes for change in their communities on issues such as women's rights, health, education, culture, food sovereignty, governance, land rights, and youth.

Direct support: The Navigator also offers small grants for community-led projects based on communities' own survey results and priorities.

For example, the implementation of the Navigator in Sápmi in **Norway, Sweden** and **Finland**, has shown that data disaggregation remains a critical issue and that it is difficult to find reliable and appropriate statistical data on the Sámi people. As a result, determining the situation of Indigenous Sámi remains extremely difficult. Indigenous Peoples often remain invisible in official data and are thus excluded from development initiatives. Production of data on their situation has therefore been a key tool for the Sámi people to advocate for their rights in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Responding to a community survey.
CREDIT: Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA



OUR THEMATIC PRIORITIES

Over the next 6 years, IWGIA will focus its efforts on four thematic priorities: **Human Rights Systems, Climate and Biodiversity, Land Defence and Territorial Governance, and Indigenous Women and Persons with Diverse SOGIESC.**

These thematic priorities are rooted in how we work and our vision of a world where Indigenous Peoples everywhere fully exercise and enjoy their inherent and internationally-recognised rights and promote their visions for well-being. They contribute to achieving our ambition to advance the recognition and defence of Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination and to land, territories, and resources. IWGIA aims to prevent violations of rights, dismantle systemic barriers, counter discrimination, and foster Indigenous-led contributions for a just and sustainable world, through direct partnership with Indigenous governments, institutions, movements and organisations, and in collaboration with a broad solidarity network.

The four thematic priorities are interlinked, complement each other, and have been identified in consultation with our partners as key priorities for the advancement of Indigenous Peoples' rights. They reflect a commitment to ensuring that Indigenous Peoples' voices are central in addressing global crises such as climate change and biodiversity loss while safeguarding their rights within human rights frameworks that are increasingly under strain. Together, the four themes strengthen the foundation on which Indigenous Peoples can secure, exercise, and expand their individual and collective rights.

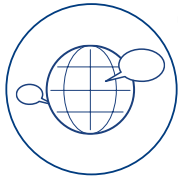
They also affirm the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural practices, and distinct identities as essential to the global community. By focusing on these four priorities, IWGIA aligns its strategies with the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples themselves, reinforcing their ability to resist dispossession, assert self-determination, and contribute to solutions to the pressing challenges of our time.

Man heading to the forest to collect betel nut and betel leaf in Khasi territory in Bangladesh.

CREDIT: Dwayne Mamo / IWGIA



HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEMS



Over the past decades of struggle, many Indigenous Peoples have secured significant gains and have emerged as powerful agents of change, building robust organisations that represent and mobilise their communities in international and regional arena. Indigenous Peoples have asserted their rights through advocacy, leading to the recognition of their rights in ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007), and in the regional human rights frameworks in Africa and Latin America.

Today, Indigenous Peoples are actively working to advance the implementation of their rights, moving from recognition to concrete action. Their sustained engagement and advocacy have also led to tangible outcomes with intergovernmental institutions such as UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) increasingly recognising and integrating Indigenous Peoples' rights and perspectives into their policies and programmes.

The international human rights system is, however, under growing strain. Rising authoritarianism, shrinking civic space, and weakening multilateral cooperation are eroding the effectiveness of international accountability mechanisms. Global institutions face political obstruction, underfunding, and attempts to redefine or dilute established human rights norms. This weakening threatens the universality of rights and undermines confidence in the system as a whole. For Indigenous Peoples, these dynamics have acute consequences. International recognition of their rights has provided crucial leverage in contexts where domestic protections remain inadequate. As international oversight weakens, so too does the ability of Indigenous Peoples to defend their land, culture, and self-determination from powerful State and corporate interests.

“Today, Indigenous Peoples are actively working to advance the implementation of their rights, moving from recognition to concrete action.”

Lecture at the University of Pretoria on Indigenous Peoples' rights across Africa. CREDIT: Nikita Bulanin / IWGIA



The peace and security of Indigenous Peoples is increasingly becoming threatened. Many Indigenous communities and their territories are disproportionately and devastatingly affected by armed conflicts, civil unrest, militarisation, the war against illegal cartels, and territorial sovereignty disputes between states. In many cases, their steadfast defence of their lands, rights, and ways of life places them in direct opposition to all parties involved in conflict — State forces, armed groups, private interests, and criminal networks — making them targets of violence, displacement, and persecution. These dynamics often unfold without acknowledging Indigenous Peoples in policy frameworks or peacebuilding strategies. Indigenous women often play a role of peace-brokers but continue to be left out of peacebuilding processes. Their exclusion perpetuates cycles of violence and undermines efforts toward sustainable peace.

Census data on Indigenous Peoples is non-existent or insufficient, which often leaves them statistically invisible in public planning. Many Indigenous Peoples lack a comprehensive analysis of their respective situations, and duty bearers lack both awareness and adequate data on Indigenous Peoples' rights. Disaggregated data generated by and for Indigenous Peoples that genuinely respond to Indigenous Peoples' priorities are necessary, and must be made available and used to inform and develop policies and programmes.

IWGIA's strategic actions under this thematic priority will safeguard hard-won gains and counter efforts to erode Indigenous Peoples' rights.

- IWGIA will strengthen its engagement with international and regional human rights systems to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' rights remain central in multilateral cooperation. We will contribute to efforts that ensure Indigenous Peoples can engage effectively in UN decision-making processes, in ways that respect their self-determined institutions and governance systems.
- IWGIA will support Indigenous women's meaningful participation in human rights systems, particularly those that address their specific discrimination.
- IWGIA will advocate for sustained resourcing of UN mechanisms and regional human rights mechanisms that support Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- IWGIA will ensure that the disproportionate impacts that global insecurity, armed conflict, and militarisation have on Indigenous Peoples and, in particular, Indigenous women, are not forgotten in international peace and security frameworks and will promote their perspectives and contributions to peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and resilience strategies.
- IWGIA will conduct advocacy with intergovernmental institutions such as FAO, IFAD, and UNESCO to ensure that their policies and programmes align with the UNDRIP, and fully recognise and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- IWGIA will support mutual learning among Indigenous Peoples to build shared strategies and promote collective reflection, helping them address current challenges in a global context increasingly adverse to human rights, and shaping their visions for their future actions.
- IWGIA will advocate for stronger protection of Indigenous human rights defenders, denounce reprisals against those engaging with international systems and push for a zero-tolerance policy and decisive action across all human rights institutions.
- IWGIA and its partners will strategically generate community-driven data to monitor and document the realities of Indigenous Peoples. This evidence base will be leveraged to strengthen advocacy while reinforcing Indigenous Peoples' pathways toward self-determined development.
- IWGIA will support Indigenous-led documentation of human rights violations to drive timely responses from international bodies. IWGIA will facilitate submissions to key mechanisms, including to UN Special Rapporteurs and treaty bodies, in order to expose violations and catalyse action.

IWGIA IS A COMMITTED PARTNER IN STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ENGAGEMENT WITH UN TREATY BODIES

Through its engagement with Treaty Bodies, IWGIA is ensuring that international human rights standards reflect and protect Indigenous Peoples' rights. IWGIA works to institutionalise the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a key interpretative standard across binding UN human rights treaties. Through strategic advocacy, we promote the adoption of general comments that affirm the UNDRIP as an authoritative framework for State obligations.

We support Indigenous representatives to participate in reporting and review processes, submit stakeholder reports, and engage in dialogue with Treaty Body experts. Our efforts include collaborating with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in order to amend reporting guidelines, harmonise language on Indigenous Peoples' rights, and develop briefings on Indigenous Peoples for Treaty Bodies.

We also provide training for Indigenous Peoples on UN Treaty Bodies and we are collaborating with the OHCHR to create tools to track recommendations.

Our objective is to strengthen jurisprudence, enhance accountability, and make the UN system more responsive to violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Opening of the 24th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2025 in New York.
CREDIT: Dwayne Mamo / IWGIA



CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY



In 2024, global temperatures surpassed a 1.5°C increase compared to pre-industrial levels. Tropical primary forest loss increased by 80% from 2023 to 2024, reaching 6.7 million hectares. While forest fires caused by drought was the principal factor, extractive activities, infrastructure expansion, agribusiness, and illegal economies all contribute to global deforestation. Indigenous Peoples, who live in highly sensitive biomes, are among the first to face the devastating consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss. Droughts, desertification, and land degradation threaten their survival, while top-down mitigation and adaptation projects, such as terrestrial carbon credit schemes and fortress conservation, further encroach upon their lands and undermine their self-determination.

While Indigenous Peoples bear the brunt, their climate and biodiversity leadership remains vital in addressing these crises. Indigenous Peoples' central role in protecting ecosystems, biodiversity and vital carbon sinks is increasingly recognised. Indigenous Peoples manage a significant portion of the world's land surface and maintain enduring connections to their lands, territories and resources. Deforestation rates are two to three times lower in lands and territories over which Indigenous Peoples have secured tenure rights, underscoring their crucial role in reversing the loss of forest ecosystems and biodiversity, and addressing climate change.

Indigenous Peoples have advocated for this recognition in international climate and biodiversity negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), elevating their voice and influence. Persistent and effective Indigenous advocacy ensured that governments, in the preamble to the Paris Agreement (2015), reiterated

their obligations to respect and promote Indigenous Peoples' rights when taking action to address climate change. More recently, Indigenous leadership influenced the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022) under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which embeds Indigenous Peoples' rights, their knowledge, and contributions into global biodiversity goals and targets – explicitly reflected in one of the four goals to be achieved by 2050 and seven of the 23 targets for 2030.

Indigenous pastoralist communities in Longido District, Tanzania, working on collective grazing governance ensuring livestock is well fed even during drought seasons.

CREDIT: UCRT



IWGIA's strategic actions under this thematic priority will support the leadership and meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples, as rights-holders and agents of change, in climate and biodiversity governance – across national, sub-national, regional and international platforms. Our approach will be rooted in human rights and acknowledge the incomparable value of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems, ensuring that climate and biodiversity action is equitable, just, effective and transformative.

- IWGIA will support Indigenous Peoples' demands for decarbonisation and the denunciation of false solutions. We will advocate for structural change that addresses the interlinked root causes of climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and systematic human rights violations.
- IWGIA will amplify calls for a just transition that respects and upholds the rights and values of Indigenous Peoples. In partnerships and alliances, we will document and denounce the disproportionate impacts of the global demand for critical raw minerals on Indigenous Peoples.
- IWGIA will advocate for respect of the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, including the right to give or withhold consent to mitigation and adaptation response measures that affect Indigenous Peoples' lands, territories and resources.
- IWGIA will, through diplomatic engagement, advocacy, and our global network, work to protect Indigenous environmental rights defenders—especially women and youth—facing threats, persecution, and violence.
- IWGIA will strengthen its strategic alliances with Indigenous organisations and nations as well as with civil society, academia, media, government authorities and multilateral institutions to promote, elevate and document Indigenous-led climate and biodiversity initiatives.
- IWGIA will promote Indigenous land and resource management models and the revitalisation of Indigenous practices as alternatives to 'fortress' conservation. We will support Indigenous territorial governance structures, representative of all intersections, that safeguard biodiversity and enhance climate resilience.
- IWGIA will leverage its technical resources to influence climate and biodiversity financing mechanisms, ensuring fair, just and direct access for Indigenous-led initiatives, including for Indigenous communities experiencing climate-induced loss and damage, and Indigenous communities at risk of extinction.

IWGIA IS SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS-LED ACTION TO STRENGTHEN CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

In **Tanzania**, grazing land management plans were developed and continue to be implemented to help villagers cope with the effects the changing climate is having in their communities and on their lands and territories. The management plans have also helped resolve long-term conflicts between neighbouring communities around water access points and resource management. Indigenous communities in Tanzania face myriad challenges related to environmental degradation and land rights, including land grabbing. They work tirelessly to secure land and natural resource rights, aiming to strengthen their resilience to climate change. In this context, IWGIA is supporting them to promote secure land tenure and climate resilience through innovative approaches.

In **Thailand**, IWGIA supported its partners to equip Indigenous leaders on how to use data tools for collecting information about the impact of climate change in their communities, and to equip Indigenous youth on how to communicate about climate change and its effects on their communities. IWGIA's partner gathered key information on the impact of climate change in the communities on health, food sources, water sources, the agricultural production cycle, traditional seeds and natural disasters. They also developed and implemented climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness plans. They constructed and maintained fire-break lines to prevent forest fires in the dry season and conducted forest patrolling.

Karen women from Highland Conservation Group in Chomthong, Thailand, engaging in forest gardening.
CREDIT: Colin Nicholas



LAND DEFENCE AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE



Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources are recognised by international laws and articulated in human rights instruments, including the UNDRIP. However, the level of recognition of land rights varies across countries and regions and many states continue to lag behind when it comes to the implementation of rights.

Several Indigenous Peoples have succeeded in defending and reclaiming their territories and, in many cases, they have been able to strengthen their autonomous governance systems and develop strong mechanisms for sustainable land management. These steps have reinforced their right to self-determination and demonstrated the importance of Indigenous-led territorial governance. In their pursuit of territorial rights, resource protection, and self-determination, Indigenous Peoples are also harnessing digital technologies to collect and generate data, improving conditions in their communities and reinforcing evidence for their inherent rights. At the same time, they are pursuing justice through legal avenues, securing landmark rulings in local, national, and regional courts that affirm and expand their rights.

Land dispossession nevertheless continues at an alarming rate. Drivers such as mining, logging, agribusiness, hydropower, illegal economies and militarisation persist, while new pressures, including the rush for critical raw materials and the green energy transition, are intensifying. These dynamics fuel displacement, militarisation, and conflict, placing Indigenous leaders at the frontline of violence and repression. In 2024 alone, according to a Global Witness Report,³ 146 land and environmental defenders were murdered or disappeared, 33% of them Indigenous, highlighting the disproportionate risks faced by those defending their territories. According to Amnesty International's State of the World's Human Rights report, 2025 witnessed the adoption of increasingly authoritarian laws and practices, alongside unprecedented criminalisation of human rights defenders.⁴ The peace and security dimensions of these threats are also becoming increasingly visible. Weak international protection mechanisms and dysfunctional national judiciaries

Working on the Management Plan for the natural resources in the Multiethnic Indigenous Territory (TIM) in Bolivia.

CREDIT: Andrés Unterladstaetter / IWGIA



not only embolden these violations but also undermine conflict prevention efforts, fuelling cycles of instability that extend beyond Indigenous communities to affect broader societies and regions. Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable to these situations and face specific violence that also needs to be addressed.

3. Global Witness. "Roots of resistance: Documenting the global struggles of defenders protecting land and environmental rights." 17 Sept 2025. <https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/land-and-environmental-defenders/roots-of-resistance/>
 4. Amnesty International. "Amnesty International Report 2024/35: The State of the World's Human Rights." 29 April 2025. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/2025/04/29/the-state-of-the-worlds-human-rights-2024/>

Under this thematic priority, IWGIA will support communities to assert their rights to land, territories, and resources, and to strengthen autonomous governance systems.

- IWGIA will, in close collaboration with Indigenous organisations, leaders, women, and youth, enhance capacities to safely document, protest, and resist land dispossession and violations of territorial rights. This includes investing in protective mechanisms and amplifying Indigenous voices and advocacy in national, regional, and international arenas.
- IWGIA will expand access to flexible and responsive funding mechanisms, including emergency support, to enable timely interventions in the face of emerging threats and shifting geopolitical dynamics.
- IWGIA will, through strategic alliances and partnerships, facilitate knowledge exchange across regions on lessons learned, best practices, and success stories in the defence of land and territorial rights.
- IWGIA will actively support Indigenous-led advocacy for the development and implementation of constructive legal frameworks, policies, and agreements. This work will be carried out in coordination with like-minded organisations, institutions, and human rights mechanisms at regional and global levels.
- IWGIA will support Indigenous communities to secure land tenure and co-develop strategies for the sustainable management of their territories and resources.
- Recognising the importance of intergenerational leadership, IWGIA will support and prioritise initiatives that strengthen Indigenous autonomies, enable women's leadership, foster youth leadership, and promote the transmission of Indigenous knowledge.
- Together with its partners, IWGIA will co-create pathways for the safe and values-aligned use of digital technologies—empowering Indigenous Peoples to monitor, document, and respond to violations, manage their territories, and advocate for their rights in innovative and culturally grounded ways.

IWGIA SUPPORTS INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN TERRITORIAL PROTECTION WITH DIGITAL TOOLS

In **Bolivia**, the Multiethnic Indigenous Territory uses satellite imagery and GIS to track deforestation, wildfires, and illegal logging. They have produced detailed maps for advocacy and trained leaders in drone and GPS technology to boost surveillance.

In **Ecuador**, the Kawsac Sacha Kichwa people have strengthened their territorial management. They have mapped sensitive ecosystems, integrated ancestral knowledge with new technologies, and created conservation regulations for the Anzu River and Yana Jita lagoon.

IWGIA also provides a platform for our partners from Asia and Africa to learn from the experiences of Latin America on the use of digital tools in territorial defence.



Presentation and discussion of village land use planning maps in Elang'ata Dapash village.
CREDIT: Pi Bjerregaard / IWGIA

INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND PERSONS WITH DIVERSE SOGIESC



The intersection of multiple layers of discrimination severely threatens the rights and lives of Indigenous women and Indigenous persons with diverse SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics). Gender-based violence and systemic discrimination remain serious challenges for these groups. They face overlapping forms of marginalisation, violence and human rights violations. Recently, we have seen a major global pushback against the hard-won gains of equal human rights for people with diverse SOGIESC and women. There are powerful attempts to bring reactionary beliefs into the mainstream and reverse gains for members of these marginalised groups.

Indigenous women have been instrumental in building alliances, leading community mobilisation, and shaping international advocacy. Their leadership is increasingly visible in policy advocacy and grassroots governance, demonstrating their indispensable role in advancing both gender equality and Indigenous self-determination. The adoption of CEDAW General Recommendation 39 on the rights of Indigenous women and girls adopted in 2022 is one of the gains of these sustained efforts. The gender justice movements have also gained momentum among Indigenous communities. Many Indigenous youths are increasingly outspoken on the importance of supporting Indigenous persons with diverse SOGIESC and addressing taboos in their communities.

“Indigenous women have been instrumental in building alliances, leading community mobilisation, and shaping international advocacy.”

Indigenous women dialogue with the European Union during the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. CREDIT: IWGIA



IWGIA's strategic actions under this priority will advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and Indigenous persons with diverse SOGIESC, positioning this work within a broader human rights and intersectional equity framework.

- IWGIA will strategically engage with and support Indigenous women's organisations and those representing Indigenous persons with diverse SOGIESC, reinforcing their leadership and agency in asserting rights and combatting systemic discrimination and violence.
- IWGIA will support and invest in strengthening the institutional capacities of Indigenous women's organisations and those representing Indigenous persons with diverse SOGIESC to enhance long-term impact and for them to better lead transformative change within their communities and beyond.
- IWGIA will support the advocacy efforts of Indigenous women and Indigenous persons with diverse SOGIESC at local, national, regional, and international levels to strengthen their access to decision-making spaces and enhance their influence.
- IWGIA will assist in documenting the lived realities, contributions, and rights violations experienced by Indigenous women and Indigenous persons with diverse SOGIESC, highlighting their resilience and leadership in addressing global challenges.
- Internally, IWGIA will build its own institutional knowledge, resources, and operational capacities to more effectively promote and defend the rights of Indigenous people affected by intersectional discrimination, ensuring that its approaches are informed, inclusive, and responsive.

IWGIA STANDS WITH INDIGENOUS WOMEN, AMPLIFYING THEIR LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITIES AND NATIONAL ARENAS

In the **Philippines**, IWGIA is supporting women's organisations to mobilise around violence against women and champion Indigenous women's rights. Their powerful campaign included the exhibit "Walls of Resistance", a striking tribute to the Cordillera women's ongoing fight to defend their land, life, and dignity.

Despite facing State-sponsored repression — from fabricated charges and terrorist labelling to relentless harassment — Indigenous women in the Cordillera continue to resist with courage and resilience.

IWGIA also provides emergency support such as emergency relocation, physical and psychological care, legal aid, counselling, and essential resources such as food and shelter to women facing gender-based violence.

National level protest against hydro-power projects being proposed within Indigenous Peoples' ancestral territories in the Philippines without their FPIC. CREDIT: *Katribu Kalipunan*



COMMITMENTS 2026-2031

IWGIA has cross-cutting commitments that address the biggest challenges and opportunities that IWGIA will engage with, beyond our thematic priorities. They are on a scale that needs strong organisational attention.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

IWGIA is firmly committed to resisting the global erosion of human rights and calls for a bold reaffirmation of Indigenous Peoples' rights – internationally-recognised and deeply rooted in Indigenous legal systems and sovereignty. IWGIA will help reposition Indigenous human rights not only as protection from harm but as a proactive framework for governance, climate action and global ethics. In this context, IWGIA will work actively to safeguard hard-won achievements and resist efforts to undermine Indigenous Peoples' rights at all levels. IWGIA will apply a strong defence strategy—one that upholds the universality and indivisibility of human rights, and which reinforces accountability, equality, and respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights.

SUPPORTING A GLOBAL INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT

In today's complex geopolitical landscape, where local realities, national politics and international relations are deeply intertwined, and the value and legitimacy of multilateral dialogue and cooperation is increasingly being challenged, it is of crucial importance to support and strengthen Indigenous Peoples' rights in all regions and at all levels. IWGIA's commitment is to support the global Indigenous movements to develop visions for the future in a situation of multiple global crises. A vision where Indigenous Peoples stand together in unity. We will also place particular focus on Indigenous youth in order to respect and support the emergence of new leaders and intergenerational sustainability. It is time to stop treating Indigenous resistance as local and marginal. Indigenous voices are global, the strategies are transnational, the futures are inherently collective. As a neutral ally and trusted partner, we will do our best to provide the space and support identified by Indigenous Peoples themselves.



Sunimarca, Peru.
CREDIT: Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA

ENHANCING AGILITY AND DIRECT SUPPORT

To respond effectively to rapidly evolving political, environmental, and security challenges, IWGIA must remain agile and flexible. Core funding is a key instrument in this effort. Over the next six years, we are committed to increasing our direct support to Indigenous organisations, institutions, and governments, building on over 30 years of experience. We will expand our flexible funding sources to better meet both local and institutional needs. By enhancing our agility, we aim to ensure that Indigenous Peoples can access timely and strategic support in moments of opportunity and crisis alike.

ADDRESSING DIGITAL DEMOCRACY, SECURITY, AND THE ROLE OF AI

The digital transformation is reshaping the way rights are claimed, defended, and violated. Digital systems now shape and impact participation, access to information, and power. IWGIA recognises the growing importance of digital democracy and the risks posed by surveillance, misinformation, and exclusion. We will work to ensure Indigenous Peoples have secure access to digital spaces and the tools to protect their data, knowledge, and identities as they assert their rights. Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents both opportunities and threats. While AI can amplify Indigenous voices, improve access to information, and support advocacy, it also risks reinforcing biases, perpetuating historic and existing systemic discrimination and erasing Indigenous knowledge systems. IWGIA will engage critically with AI technologies, advocating for ethical standards, inclusive human rights-based designs, and for Indigenous-led innovation. Our ambition is to ensure that AI serves as a tool for empowerment and human rights, not marginalisation.

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN URBAN AREAS AND THE DIASPORA

A significant number of Indigenous Peoples live in urban environments, where they face poverty, racism, discrimination, and marginalisation. Urban migration often occurs in search of education and employment opportunities, particularly for Indigenous youth, but also as a result of forced evictions, land dispossession, militarisation, environmental degradation, and climate-related disasters. Indigenous rights defenders are frequently pressured to leave their territories; some are forced to move abroad. These transitions bring unique challenges to identity, culture, and connection to lands, compounded by the legacy of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. IWGIA is committed to addressing these realities by supporting human rights defenders when displacement occurs and strengthening engagement with Indigenous youth in urban settings and people in the diaspora. Our work will focus on tackling systemic barriers, amplifying Indigenous voices, and promoting the effective enjoyment of individual and collective rights. All actions will be guided by international human rights instruments, with a central focus on the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** and other relevant standards that affirm the rights of Indigenous Peoples irrespective of their place of residence.

Indigenous community
in North Sumatra,
Indonesia.

CREDIT: *Signe Leth* / IWGIA





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Khomani San community meeting in Kalahari, Northern Cape province of South Africa.
CREDIT: Nikita Bulanin / IWGIA