



**Strengthening Dialogue:
UN Experience with Small Farmer Organizations
and Indigenous Peoples**

by

Nora McKeon

with Carol Kalafatic



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Preface

Over the past two decades, the United Nations' relationship with civil society organizations has greatly evolved. These organizations have become essential partners of the United Nations in an array of humanitarian, development and peace-building operations.

This process of increasing engagement with civil society has strengthened the United Nations and the intergovernmental debate that takes place within its forums and has been part of the ongoing process of institutional change underway in the Organization in recent years.

Yet, as *Strengthening Dialogue: UN Experience with Small Farmer Organizations and Indigenous Peoples* demonstrates, there is room to explore better interaction with some sectors of civil society, especially small-scale peasant farmers, fisherfolk, rural women, slum dwellers, migrant workers, people living with HIV/AIDS, indigenous peoples and other constituencies whose access to global decision-making forums is still limited. The engagement of these groups in the work of the United Nations is especially relevant in a moment in which global challenges have emerged with force – climate change, energy, water, food – which cannot be addressed by Member State governments alone.

Empowering these people's movements to interact with Member State governments and to participate in policy debates at national and global levels contributes to the legitimacy and accountability of the democratic process and helps the United Nations to defend human rights and work towards a more equitable world order.

Strengthening Dialogue highlights some of the mutual benefits of a closer working relationship between the United Nations and people's movements by focusing on two case studies: small farmers and indigenous peoples. The result of more than 18 months of work, this publication is intended for all those interested in exploring new mechanisms and creative formats for engaging with underrepresented, yet critical, constituencies for the United Nations.

Elisa Peter
Acting Coordinator
UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service

October 2009

Foreword

Smallholder farmers and other resource-poor rural producers grow most of the food in Asia and Africa – but they also constitute the overwhelming majority of people living in poverty and hunger. The membership-based organizations representing them at local, national and international levels are therefore key strategic partners for institutions such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development that work to enable poor rural women and men to overcome poverty. We believe that empowering these organizations and building their capacity to serve their members better are essential for sustainable rural development and the eradication of poverty and hunger.

The Farmers' Forum process, one of the case studies in this report, showcases how UN institutions and rural organizations can work together to achieve these goals. Rooted in ongoing concrete collaboration between farmers' organizations at country and regional levels, the Farmers' Forum takes place every two years in conjunction with the Governing Council of IFAD. It enables producers' organizations from all over the world to exchange knowledge and to develop partnerships with each other and with IFAD. It also provides a forum through which, by reporting to the Governing Council, these organizations can make their voices heard by policymakers.

IFAD's experience shows that the permanent process of consultation and dialogue in the framework of the Forum has a positive influence on our own capacity to support our target groups. We have a lot to learn from the representatives of rural producers. We strive to work with them as closely as possible at all levels of our activities to enhance the quality of the local development programmes we finance and to enable us to respond more wisely to the needs and initiatives of smallholder farmers around the world.

The Farmers' Forum process is also a way of strengthening IFAD's accountability to the people we serve. Opening IFAD's governing body meetings to independent representatives of rural producers contributes to transparency and provides a platform for them to tell us how we can do better. Their feedback is not always comfortable to hear, but it is always constructive and we value it greatly.

Matthew Wyatt
Assistant President
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International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

October 2009

Foreword

Heads of State and Government convened in Rome in 1996 with the will to halve hunger by 2015. Their common vision became an integral part of internationally agreed development Goals including the Millennium Development Goals.

But we must face the fact that the number of hungry and malnourished in the world is actually rising and has reached over one billion in 2009. Under-investment in agriculture for decades and little emphasis in public policy on its importance for development have aggravated the situation until escalating food prices stimulated public pressure.

We currently face a set of immense and interrelated challenges: sustainable availability and quality of food, uncertainties about the extent and impacts of climate change, identification of viable and environmentally desirable sources of energy, and the multiple and far-reaching effects of enduring poverty. No one country or institution can address these issues alone. Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector must join forces and forge a common vision and complement one another in action.

Working with people's movements – notably members' organizations of farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples and other social groups – is critical. FAO has found that collaborating with those most affected by, but more importantly most capable of directly confronting challenges to food and agriculture is fundamental.

This publication by the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service successfully documents promising examples from FAO and other agencies and points to ways forward for the future within the UN system. FAO is convinced that alliances with people's movements are vital to achieving a world free of hunger.

Annika Söder
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Office of United Nations Coordination and Millennium Development Goals follow-up
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October 2009

Introduction

The UN and civil society: Who is missing and why does it matter?

The United Nations' interaction with civil society has increased significantly over the past 15 years with the bulk of these relations being with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of various kinds – humanitarian and development NGOs, advocacy groups, faith-based organizations and professional associations. These organizations provide extremely valuable contributions to the work of the UN and are active participants in global conferences. Far less present in UN forums, however, are those sectors of the world's population who are intended to be the main beneficiaries of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed goals and who are key actors in attaining them: peasant farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolk, rural women, slum dwellers, migrant workers, indigenous peoples and others. The relative absence of these stakeholders and rights holders might have been understandable some years ago, when most of these constituencies were weak and fragmented. But over the past decade they have made great strides in building up their own organizations, mandated to speak for them and accountable to them, and in developing their capacity to articulate their messages.

The UN needs the direct input of people's movements¹ – as distinct from NGOs – in order to ensure that the policies it adopts and the programmes it implements incorporate the insights and proposals of those they are intended to support. Engaging them is particularly relevant and urgent in a moment in which global challenges have emerged with force – issues of food security, the need for renewable energy sources, increasing water stress as well as the overall impacts of climate change – which call into question the development approaches that have dominated the past decades and cannot be addressed by Member State governments alone. For their part, people's movements, representing the prime victims of the global crises, but also the proponents of potential solutions, need the UN since it is one of the most relevant international forums for the expression of their concerns. There is a mutually beneficial opportunity, and the objective of this publication is to help both parties seize it. This publication, authored by Nora McKeon with Carol Kalafatic, argues that it is crucial, urgent and feasible to enhance the United Nations system's engagement with people's movements in relation to the UN's overarching development and human rights agenda.

Defining the terms

The difficulties of grappling with so vast and heterogeneous a category as “civil society” is one reason often cited by UN officials and member government representatives to motivate their hesitancy to engage more intensely with these actors. But sorting out the contents of the “civil society basket” is less complicated than it might seem, if certain basic distinctions are applied. It is important to do so since the different identities of different kinds of civil society organizations (CSOs) make them suitable for different kinds of engagement with the UN system.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are voluntary, non-profit organizations. They provide services of various kinds to disadvantaged sectors of the population and conduct advocacy on issues that concern them, but they have not always been established by these sectors and do not always represent them. NGOs may relate to the UN system in various ways. Some are operational NGOs active in humanitarian relief operations and/or development action. Some are advocacy NGOs concerned to raise awareness and influence ideas and policies on various issues. Some combine operations with advocacy. NGOs often act as service-providers in UN programmes and are the category of civil society organizations (CSOs) with most presence in UN system policy forums.

People’s organizations (POs) are established by and represent sectors of the population like small farmers, artisanal fisherfolk, and slum dwellers. This basic characteristic makes them different from NGOs. POs take a wide variety of forms and exist at various levels.

- *Community-based organizations (CBOs)* mobilize and represent grassroots populations in both rural and urban areas and directly address their immediate concerns. Examples include neighbourhood associations, water-users groups, and rural women’s credit associations. Over the past decade they have increasingly become widespread partners of UN programmes at the local level.
- *People’s organization platforms* structured above the local community level have been built up by marginalized sectors of the population, over the past decade in particular, in order to defend their members’ interests in policy discussions and programme negotiations at national, regional and global levels. These platforms, including platforms of small farmers, herders or fisherfolks, are not yet sufficiently recognized and engaged by the UN system in country programmes and projects and in global forums. In this publication, the focus will be on platforms created by small farmers’ organizations.

Indigenous peoples (IPs) are distinct and diverse peoples and nations that seek their cultural survival and wellbeing through the exercise of their inherent human rights and collective rights, including their right of self-determination, their right to development, and their rights to the lands, territories and natural resources they have traditionally occupied and used. They have a unique relationship with the UN, which they have fought hard to establish (see detailed working definition of IPs in Chapter 1).

People’s movements (PMs) is the term used in this publication as an imperfect overarching category that includes people’s organizations and people organized primarily to defend their political and cultural identity and rights. In this text, it includes indigenous peoples and is used for purposes of textual flow only, since IPs are recognized within the UN system as having characteristics which distinguish them in fundamental ways from “people’s movements” in general (see Chapter 1).

Methodology and contents

This publication is based on an inquiry commissioned by the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS). The project emerged from an earlier study² which sought to determine to what extent the UN system had incorporated into its working methods the strong engagement with civil society that had characterized the world summits of the 1990s. One unexpected finding of this study regarded the kinds of civil society organizations with which relations were being maintained. Only three of the 24 UN system agencies and programmes surveyed reported strong engagement with people's movements in their global work and only one at country level. With the support of the network of UN system civil society liaison offices, NGLS took up the challenge of finding out more about the reasons for this gap and seeing how it might be redressed.

The many organizations researched in this publication – including rural producers' organizations comprised of global, national and regional networks as well as indigenous peoples – are those which have been established by constituencies, that are directly affected by global policies, but which have relatively little voice in global policy dialogue. For the purposes of this inquiry, the study includes organizations that are structured up to the national and regional or even global level. The wide variety of community-based organizations (CBOs) that exist throughout the world are not considered although they are highly legitimate people's organizations and effective instruments for mobilizing their members and facilitating their participation in local development efforts. Indeed, mechanisms for involving them in UN system projects and programmes are well-developed and widely used. CBOs, however, precisely because of their local nature, are less likely than people's organization platforms or IPs to be active at the national, regional and global levels that are the concern of this publication.

Over the past decade, a range of marginalized sectors of society have built up their capacity to network and to interact with national, regional and global intergovernmental forums. The scope of this inquiry has focused on two such sectors: small farmers' organizations and indigenous peoples. These two constituencies have accumulated experience of interaction with a range of United Nations entities from which it is useful to learn. They are also key players in the global challenges the world is facing, the food price crisis and climate change in particular. The focus on these two constituencies, however, is only illustrative of the issue of enhancing UN engagement with people's movements generally. The investigation presented in this publication could – and should – be extended to sectors such as slum dwellers, migrant workers, people living with HIV/AIDS and many others.

The project adopted an approach aimed at building dialogue among selected people's organizations, IPs and UN system entities as an integral part of the inquiry. Over the first ten months of 2008, the two-person project team³ conducted individual and collective interviews with almost one hundred members of the secretariats of UN system entities, ranging from operational officers to senior managers. In parallel, discussions were held with dozens of members of small farmer platforms and indigenous peoples groups. The complete list of organizations interviewed is provided in the Annex. In addition, some key government representatives were interviewed both in New York and in Rome. The team met with participants in four existing mechanisms designed to promote UN-civil society interaction in which people's movements are strongly represented: the Farmers' Forum (FF) of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Civil Society Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) that interfaces with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), and the major groups system of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). They also observed major international conferences in which people's movements debated with governments under UN auspices on issues such as climate change and the food crisis. Two country case studies – on Burkina Faso with a focus on small farmers and Bolivia with a focus on IPs – provided an opportunity to test what progress is being made in bridging the gap between global policy discourse and local action.

In November 2008, a working seminar in New York brought together members of small farmer platforms and indigenous peoples and representatives of the UN system entities around the table to react to the issues and proposals which had emerged from the interviews and encounters and to build better mutual understanding. In June 2009, the emerging results of the project were discussed with and enriched by the network of UN system civil society liaison officers at a meeting held in Geneva.

This publication is the concrete result of over a year of interaction and dialogue. The frank opinions expressed testify to the kind of open and direct exchange that has taken place. The publication seeks to demonstrate – based on existing experience – that strengthened cooperation between the UN and people’s movements can produce multiple and mutual benefits. It can help contribute to making the UN a more effective defender of common goods, human rights and peace. It can reinforce the strategies which people’s movements adopt to advance their agendas at all levels, from local to global. Finally, it can add value to the engagement of other sectors of civil society.

Chapter 1 of the publication is based exclusively on comments made by the interviewees. It discusses the changing context in which engagement between the UN and people’s movements is situated. It identifies potential benefits of closer engagement, examines the obstacles that need to be addressed, and notes the special requirements of cooperation at country level. On each of these issues, the viewpoints of the small farmer platforms and indigenous peoples and the UN system participants are juxtaposed in order to highlight both different perspectives and common ground. Chapter 2 takes a look at existing experiences of interaction at both global and country levels from which valuable lessons can be learned. Chapter 3 presents the conclusions of the investigation. While fully recognizing the diversities that exist both among different people’s movements and within the UN system, it suggests a core set of principles and practices and some initiatives that could be undertaken jointly in order to enhance engagement. It further identifies a number of strategic orientations and opportunities on which to focus, and suggests next steps. This publication aims to stimulate interest in extending and expanding this mutual process of engagement and to encourage action on its recommendations.

Chapter 1

The UN and People's Movements in Dialogue: Experience with Small Farmer Platforms and Indigenous Peoples

1. Evolutions in UN relations with people's movements

1.1 As perceived by UN entities

The evolving context of global governance and its impact on UN relations with civil society was the first issue discussed with UN participants in this study. The UN interviewees came from a wide variety of entities (see Annex), and were based at different levels from headquarters to country offices. All agree that the past two decades have seen a phenomenal transformation in the scope of world affairs in the direction of a multi-actor global governance system. The private sector and civil society have joined States as players in global governance processes and the UN system often faces the difficult challenge of balancing various interests.

How is the UN dealing with this complex situation? Some see the big issue as whether the UN should serve simply as a neutral forum for intergovernmental processes or whether – as an institution – it should act as an advocate for the poor and in defense of the values on which it was founded. This is particularly crucial, in the view of many UN interviewees, in a moment in which profound crises have called into question dominant development approaches. So doing, they have opened up new opportunities to address global governance goals while, at the same time, exacerbating power struggles between conflicting interests. At the very least, most respondents feel, it is essential that the UN constitute a forum in which the voices of all stakeholders, not only Member State governments, can be heard.

These evolutions in the political context and in the equilibrium among States and non-State actors have inevitably impacted on the UN system's relations with civil society. UN respondents are unanimous in judging that the global summits of the 1990s have highlighted the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to bring emerging issues to the attention of the general public and to get them placed on the agenda of intergovernmental bodies. The UN has increasingly recognized the fact that States are not the only actors and has adapted to this reality. Most UN interviewees felt, however, that the process has not been linear or cumulative and is subject to back-tracking, which they suggest is illustrated by the more restrictive format of the +5 and +10 review conferences and the Millennium Summit as compared with the summits of the 1990s. Some feel that UN approaches to civil society participation often retain a top-down approach. Other respondents, however, judge that the UN has done a lot to open its doors but that civil society feels it is not enough. A middle ground position is that civil society views are now voiced, at least in some UN forums, but that their impact on outcomes is open to question. Regarding the level of acceptance of civil society participation within the UN, reactions range from rejection to a more utilitarian approach in which CSOs are seen as service-providers, to true partners and legitimate participants in policy-making – but this is a minority position. Several interviewees note, however, that the current crises create opportunities for increased CSO participation and input in decision-making processes.

Whose voices are being heard is another issue, one which is at the heart of this publication. With a few exceptions, UN interviewees acknowledge that their entities relate essentially to NGOs. Engagement with people's movements representing sectors of the population that are most dramatically affected by global decision-making is limited or non-existent.

1.2 As experienced by people's movements

The two constituencies dealt with in these pages – small farmer platforms and indigenous peoples – have some important points in common, but there are also significant differences in their histories, identities and advocacy platforms that need to be recognized and respected, as will be detailed below. One shared characteristic is that all are deeply rooted in local realities but have reached up to the global sphere in order to defend their autonomy and the values, livelihoods and cultures of their members and citizens. They look to the United Nations system as a potentially significant forum for the advancement of their objectives, and have had mixed experiences in trying to occupy this space.

Small farmer platforms



Over the past two decades, many peasant organizations have become more active on global issues and have reconsidered the way they engage with intergovernmental organizations. Various factors can explain why there is increased interest from these organizations in becoming active beyond the local and national levels. First of all, the peasant population, especially in the developing world, suffered the impact of the pro-industrialization orientation of development investments of the 1970s as well as the attendant debt crisis that pushed governments to perpetuate reliance on export crops in order to generate foreign exchange. Along with their counterparts in the industrialized countries, they were victims of the worldwide farm crisis of the 1970s and the downside of the liberalization of global food trade for which it set the stage. Together, they suffer the effects of the increased dominance of industrial agriculture which has characterized the past few decades and the fast concentration which has put a few corporations in control of key commodity chains. All of these trends have stimulated the structuring and networking of small rural producers' movements at all levels. Two decades ago only one farmers' platform was present at global UN forums, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), and its membership was concentrated in the industrialized countries. This picture has changed enormously and today it is possible for the UN system to engage with a variety of autonomous rural producers platforms at all levels, from national to global.

At the same time, the questions on which these platforms are seeking to dialogue with the UN have become issues of great currency, further encouraging interactions with intergovernmental organizations. After decades of neglect, the agricultural sector has indeed climbed back to the top of the development agenda. It has been a key issue in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round of negotiations. Millennium Development Goal 1 implicitly highlights agriculture as an important component of strategies to reduce poverty and hunger. Also, for the first time in 25 years, the World Bank's 2008 *World Development Report* was dedicated to the theme of agriculture and development. The eruption of the food price crisis in the last months of 2007 has generated a widespread awareness of the dangers of advising developing countries to address the fundamental issue of ensuring their national food security by concentrating on producing export crops for which they were considered to have a comparative advantage and importing what was assumed to be cheap food from elsewhere with the revenues generated. Enhancing national food production in developing countries is now viewed as a priority, and it is recognized that this means supporting smallholder farm families since it is they who account for some 80% of the world's food production. This is an explicit aim of the Comprehensive Framework for Action developed by the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF) established by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in April 2008 to promote a unified response to the challenge of achieving global food security.⁴

The rest of the section will provide an overview of the constituency of small-scale rural producers and will look at the role that evolutions in the global arena in general – and the UN system in particular – have played in the establishment and development of three quite different platforms. Two of these platforms are global: Via Campesina (VC) and the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP). The other is regional: the Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA). There are, of course, many other important networks which federate small rural producers on a regional basis or by specific categories, like artisanal fisherfolk or agricultural workers. The focus on Via Campesina, IFAP and ROPPA in this section is merely illustrative.⁵

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)⁶ is the oldest of the three platforms and the one with the most extensive relations with the UN system. It was established in 1946 by farm leaders from 13 countries seeking a voice at the international level, in explicit reaction to the post-war creation of the United Nations. IFAP's founders envisaged it as a farmers' advisory body to FAO. Of the three platforms, IFAP is the only one which has formal consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), accorded in 1947. For the first few decades, IFAP's membership was concentrated in industrialized countries. The year 2000 marked a watershed in its outreach to farmers' organizations in the developing regions. IFAP now groups over 600 million farmers in 79 countries. Its objectives are to constitute a forum in which leaders of national farmers' organizations can meet to take coordinated action; keep members informed about international events of concern to them; act as a spokesperson for the world's farmers in international forums; and promote independent, representative organizations of farmers throughout the world.

IFAP's relations with FAO have gone through various phases. Up until the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996, organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC, like IFAP, had a privileged relationship with FAO. The situation changed with the WFS and the establishment of the International Civil Society Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)⁷ as a mechanism

to facilitate the voices of not only peasant farmers, but also artisanal fishworkers, indigenous peoples and other constituencies which previously had not had access to global policy forums. Now, with the food crisis, IFAP is once again actively engaging with FAO. IFAP also has a longstanding relationship with the ECOSOC Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), where it acts as focal point for the “farmers” major group.⁸ Engagement with IFAD has entered into a new and more dynamic phase with the establishment of the Farmers’ Forum.⁹ More recently, good relations have developed with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in the area of commodities and risk management, and exchanges with the World Health Organization (WHO) have begun regarding obesity and diet. IFAP has established consultative relations with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC), the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and has begun to interact with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in the context of the climate change debate.

Via Campesina (VC)¹⁰ was established in 1993 at a founding congress attended by 55 organizations of small farmers from 36 countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia. From the beginning, VC has been strongly rooted in the developing regions. The trigger for its creation was the advent of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Agricultural policies, the founding organizations realized, would henceforth be determined globally and it was essential for small farmers to be able to defend their interests at that level. VC defines itself as an international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous peoples, rural youth and agricultural workers. It now groups some 148 member organizations from 69 countries in Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe, representing over 200 million farmers. The principle of food sovereignty is proposed as the overarching framework for food and agriculture policies, in alternative to the paradigm of liberalization and privatization. This concept was introduced into global discourse by Via Campesina at the civil society consultation held in parallel to the World Food Summit in 1996 and was further developed at a global gathering of small-scale food producer organizations in Mali in 2007.¹¹

Via Campesina’s prime objective is the defense and strengthening of peasant-based agricultural production, primarily food production for local consumption. In pursuit of its objectives, VC conducts campaigns on issues such as removing agriculture from the agenda of the WTO; preserving seeds; agrarian reform; and the idea of a convention on peasant rights. VC’s campaign strategy combines mass sensitization and mobilization with the formulation and defense of alternative positions and proposals. VC considers the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions (BWIs) as power centres which hinder the attainment of its objectives. Its stance vis-à-vis these institutions is often confrontational, excluding dialogue. Other international organizations are viewed as potential allies or, at least, as institutions which provide some political space for peasant organizations to advance their agendas. These include FAO and IFAD above all. VC is a member of the Farmers’ Forum and of the International Civil Society Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). It participated in early sessions of the Commission for Sustainable Development as one of the focal points for farmers, along with IFAP. However, it dropped out at the time of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 because of disagreement over the rules governing the major group mechanism. More recently, it has shown interest in the CBD and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). At its 5th General Assembly in 2008, VC devoted a session to examining its relations with international institutions, an indication of the interest it attaches to this relationship.

The Network of West Africa Peasant and Agricultural Producers’ Organizations (ROPPA)¹² is rooted in a long tradition of rural social organizations in West Africa. Today’s movement was born in the 1970s in reaction to a disastrous drought and to dissatisfaction with the results of ten years of independence which had not brought the benefits that rural people had expected nor much voice in the political arena. The situation of rural people was exacerbated in the 1980s by the introduction of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), which liberalized markets and drastically cut back State support for agriculture. These policies, however, also opened political space for the growth of autonomous people’s organizations, as did the democratization of several West African countries in the early 1990s. A long process of reflection and exchanges among peasant organizations and alliance building with other sectors and institutions led to the creation of ROPPA in 2000.

ROPPA now groups the national peasant platforms of 12 West African countries, representing some 45 million family farmers, including pastoralists and artisanal fisherfolk. Some of the ROPPA national platforms are members of Via Campesina and/or IFAP at the global level, but ROPPA strongly defends its identity and autonomy as a regional African organization. ROPPA

is recognized by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as its interlocutor for the rural world. ROPPA's main objectives are promoting family-based agriculture and strengthening its capacity to meet Africa's food needs. Attaining this goal, in ROPPA's analysis, requires national and regional agricultural policies – formulated with stakeholder participation – which reinstate the support services for agriculture; direct public investment to rural economies and infrastructure; defend peasant producers' access to land and other natural resources; build local and regional markets; and defend them against unfair competition from subsidized agricultures.

ROPPA's primary interlocutors are the West African governments, ECOWAS and the African Union (AU), in that order. Together with the four other African sub-regional farmers' networks,¹³ ROPPA is now in the process of establishing a Pan-African Farmers Platform which is seeking recognition by the African Union. Holding African governments and intergovernmental institutions accountable to defending the interests of the majority of the population is the movement's primary goal. ROPPA recognizes, however, that national governments may have limited policy space. This has led it to direct its attention to global forums and to espouse the principle of food sovereignty. Some of ROPPA members' first introduction to the UN system (although ROPPA was not yet formally established) was at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the World Food Summit in 1996 and in WTO meetings. ROPPA's main UN family interlocutors are FAO and IFAD: it participates in IFAD's Farmers' Forum and FAO's IPC. Confrontational interaction takes place with the World Bank (WB), particularly at national level, and with the WTO. Relations with other UN entities are scanty or nonexistent.

Indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples (IPs) are extraordinarily diverse. It is estimated that there are well over 370 million indigenous peoples in some 90 countries worldwide,¹⁴ representing over 4,500 (or 75%) of the world's 6,000 cultures.¹⁵ As a whole, IPs share a specific set of characteristics that make them distinct from others who engage with the UN system. Although many IPs are among the "rural poor"/small farmers, and have forged important alliances with them to address shared concerns and priorities, IPs are different from them for historical, cultural and socio-political reasons. Because of these characteristics, IPs have unique relationships to the governments of the countries in which they live, centered on their intent to exercise their right of *self-determination*. They pursue self-determination not as a means to undermine State sovereignty but as a means to co-exist with others living within those States and, at the same time, to determine their own pathways for economic, social and cultural development.

There is no universally accepted definition of "indigenous peoples," and there are historic differences between countries and regions with respect to the relationship of IPs and States. But this has not been and should not be considered an obstacle to working effectively with IPs within the UN system. A working definition, which centres on several of IPs' key characteristics, was developed as a result of decades of advocacy and extensive studies. It provides the practical basis on which international organizations and legal experts interact with IPs.¹⁶ It states that IPs:

- have historical continuity with societies developed within their territories *prior* to invasion and colonization;
- live within/maintain links to their ancestral territories;
- self-identify, and are recognized by other groups or by State authorities as distinct collectivities;
- seek to remain culturally, geographically and institutionally distinct from dominant society;
- went from being fully independent Peoples to being colonized;
- retain and seek to retain:
 - their own forms of social organization, governance and customary law (as *Nations*)
 - strong *collective* ties to ancestral territories;
 - distinct languages and other cultural features;
- have a unique relationship to their lands, territories and natural resources, which:
 - includes cultural, spiritual, economic and political dimensions and responsibilities;
 - includes an inter-generational aspect crucial to IPs' continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems;
 - is fundamentally *collective* (IPs have collective rights under international law);
- have a relationship to States which centers on *self-determination*;¹⁷
- face trans-boundary challenges in the form of State borders, policies/conflicts limiting access to their habitats and natural resources, etc. (e.g., the Mohawk divided by the US-Canada border, the Shuar divided by the Ecuador-Peru border, numerous IPs in the Indo-Burma region and many nomadic IPs).

A separate body of international legal instruments has been developed for the recognition and protection of the inherent rights of IPs (see the following section). Furthermore, IPs' vital role in sustainable development, as well as their social marginalization and exclusion from the benefits of such development, and detrimental impacts to their cultures, identities and resources, are increasingly being recognized.

While the majority of IPs live in economic poverty and are among the most vulnerable social groups in terms of food and livelihood security, health and overall wellbeing, they manage, provide, and are currently the primary custodians of the majority of the world's agricultural diversity and its related ecosystems, bio-cultural and knowledge diversity. This, in turn, forms the basis of their vital role in addressing global challenges, and makes IPs' direct and effective engagement with the UN system essential to the fulfillment of the UN's mandate.

Their relations with intergovernmental organizations

IPs first engaged with the international policy arena in 1923 when Chief Deskaheh (Cayuga Nation) tried to bring concerns about treaty abrogation to the League of Nations in representation of the Haudenosaunee or Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. Despite more than a year of sustained effort, his request to address the League of Nations was denied. From 1924-1925, similar efforts by TW Ratana and others on behalf of the Maori Nation also proved unsuccessful.

Shortly after the UN was established, several hundreds of IPs' traditional authorities as well as delegates of IPs' social organizations and NGOs progressively brought their peoples' voices to diverse UN policy forums and conferences regarding human rights, and social and economic development. Although IPs are not non-governmental entities (many have Nation-to-Nation treaties and agreements among themselves and with several Member States of the UN), their willingness to establish their own NGOs in order to engage broadly with the UN system is in response to the accreditation guidelines of the UN system and does not signify that IPs deny their inherent self-determination and self-governance structures/institutions.



An extraordinary amount of progress took place from the 1950s-1990s through the publication of studies and the development of a unique set of legal norms and standards pertaining to IPs. These positive measures aimed to raise IPs' conditions while reflecting their aspirations to protect, maintain and develop their cultures and institutions. The Martinez Cobo Study (1981-1984), a five-volume comprehensive study on the situation of IPs (which took ten years of research by the Special Rapporteur of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities), was a landmark appeal to the international community to take decisive action on behalf of IPs. In 1982, ECOSOC established the then Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) as a subsidiary body of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.¹⁸ The WGIP's major focus was the evolution of standards regarding the rights and fundamental freedoms of IPs. WGIP has since been replaced (October 2008) by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which serves as a subsidiary expert mechanism of the newly established Human Rights Council.

ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples [1989] became the second international legal instrument to explicitly address indigenous and tribal peoples (ILO Convention No. 107 [1957] being the first, although its emphasis was on assimilation).¹⁹ ILO 169 enshrines the basic rights of those in independent countries who are IPs, and peoples whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community. Its provisions are based on the principle that within national societies, indigenous and tribal peoples will continue as distinct peoples with their own traditions and societal structures, yet have a right to participate directly and effectively in decision-making processes within the State(s) in which they live. Several provisions oblige States to protect traditional lands and the rights of ownership and possession established within the indigenous communities, with particular attention to the *collective* aspects of IPs' relationship with their lands and territories.²⁰

In 1994, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the First International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004) and included as one of the Decade's goals the establishment of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). The UNPFII, a unique and primary interface mechanism for engagement with Member States and the UN system, was established by ECOSOC in 2000 and held its first annual session in 2002. The Permanent Forum will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 2. The Second Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples with the theme "Partnership for action and dignity" is being observed from 2005-2015. The Programme of Action for the Second Decade was launched during the fifth session of UNPFII in 2006.

In 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted the milestone UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which sets the minimum international standards for the protection and promotion of the rights of IPs (see Box 2).

In 2008, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Working Group on Programming Policy endorsed the UNDG Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, developed by the UNDG Task Team on Indigenous Issues.²¹ The Guidelines aim to assist the UN system to mainstream and integrate IPs' issues in operational activities and programmes at country level, taking into careful account the realities faced by IPs and the full range of existing international norms and standards adopted to ensure the realization of IPs rights.

Box 2

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

UNDRIP – the only UN human rights declaration that was drafted with the participation of the rights-holders themselves (i.e. IPs) – was adopted by the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007.²² It defines the international minimum standards for the protection and fulfillment of the rights of IPs, meaning that current and future laws, policies, and programmes regarding or affecting IPs will need to be consistent with it. UNDRIP applies International Human Rights law to IPs as distinct peoples; many of its 46 articles are legally binding through their basis in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Declaration addresses both individual and collective rights, cultural rights and identity, rights to education, health, employment, language and others. The Declaration explicitly encourages harmonious and cooperative relations between States and indigenous peoples. It prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), in a highly important legal commentary it adopted at its eighth session, (Annex, E/2009/43) stated, among other things, that “the Declaration is a human rights standard elaborated upon the fundamental rights of universal application and set in the cultural, economic, political and social context of indigenous peoples. The procedure through which it has been drafted has conferred upon it a special status – The human rights envisaged in the Declaration are the same human rights that have been recognized for the rest of humankind. A number of articles are based on the human rights covenants and other conventions, or they may already today have the quality of customary law by virtue of policies implemented in national jurisdictions. As expressions of international customary law, they must be applied regardless of the nature of the document in which they are stated or agreed....” The Forum finally stated that this understanding of the legal nature of the Declaration will form the basis of its work under Article 42.

Many IPs feel that the adoption of the UNDRIP is a major victory in the international IPs' movement and struggle for IPs' rights as distinct peoples. Thus far it has been incorporated into national law in Bolivia and has been cited in legal decisions in favor of IPs by the Supreme Court of Belize and the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. It also provides the guiding framework for the work of the UNPFII.

2. Potential benefits of closer engagement

2.1 As perceived by UN entities

Some of the UN staff interviewed are clear about the distinction between people's movements and NGOs, but others tend to think of civil society as a single undifferentiated category. Still others divide the CSO universe into national or international NGOs, on the one hand, and community-based organizations (CBOs) on the other, unaware that in many parts of the world people's movements have structured up to the national, regional or even global level. The degree of awareness of UN officials clearly influences their perception of the benefits of closer engagement with PMs.

Generally speaking, interviewees feel that civil society participation in UN affairs is indispensable in efforts to achieve the MDGs and increase the transparency of UN decision-making processes. Other benefits mentioned during the interviews are more specifically linked to PMs. Many staff feel that it is important for the UN to broaden its civil society outreach and to diversify the type of interlocutors it engages in dialogue with. The legitimacy of POs and IPs are felt to be particularly strong since they represent people's constituencies or Nations. This may be particularly important in a moment in which issues of legitimacy and accountability of civil society organizations are increasingly attracting attention. Since a great number of PMs are predominantly located in the developing world, closer engagement with them could help to correct the current unbalanced representation of civil society organizations from the North and the South at UN meetings. More than one interviewee feel PMs could be important allies in enhancing the UN system's image as an institution dedicated to fighting poverty and advocating global economic equity. "We need them when we have to address difficult issues like agrarian reform," one interviewee specifies. Several respondents judge that, given the PMs' increasing effectiveness in influencing national policy, the UN – as a global policy forum – simply cannot afford not to listen to them.

PMs are seen to operate as a particularly effective "early warning system" on emerging issues like the food price crisis and climate change since their members perceive and react to them on the ground, often long before official institutions become aware of them. They can contribute to the current search for alternative, more equitable and sustainable paradigms, an important role in a moment in which conventional approaches are being questioned. Small farmers and indigenous peoples are the main actors of food production and the stewards of the environment and biodiversity. They are also an important source of knowledge since local expertise and, in the case of IPs, traditional knowledge are essential to the kind of ecosystem perspective that is required to fight against climate change and biodiversity loss.



People's participation in the formulation and implementation of programmes that are intended to benefit them has been universally recognized as essential in order to make such programmes and their implementation effective and sustainable. But even if this practice were applied universally – which is not the case – participation at the programme level would not suffice to attain the ultimate goals of the UN system. One UN entity, which has made participation of community-based organizations a cornerstone of its methodology, realized after a decade of experience that its anti-poverty field activities would not be sustainable without "pro-poor" policy change at the national level. This recognition led it to add a new dimension to its strategy: capacity building for national and regional rural people's organizations to enable them to effectively advocate for their members' interests.

Asked to switch seats and to identify potential benefits which they thought enhanced engagement with the UN might bring to PMs, interviewees suggest that they could profit from access to intergovernmental policy forums and to the facilitation role which UN entities are able to play. Engaging with governments collectively could help to prod along the more hesitant ones. Technical assistance in developing sound policy positions, as in the case of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) farmers' organizations and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) presented in Box 3, is cited as another benefit. One respondent suggests, however, that PMs should avoid being caught up in time-consuming international negotiations to the detriment of their attention to problems closer to home and should constantly ask themselves "who's benefiting," "where are our priorities?"

Box 3

**Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and family farming:
A virtuous partnership between small farmers' organizations, UN institutions
and NGOs**

IFAD, FAO and the EuropAfrica Campaign²³ supported African and Caribbean regional networks of farmers' organizations (EAFF, PROPAC, ROPPA, SACAU and WINFA) to participate in the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations between the European Union (EU) and the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

With the support of their partners, the farmers' organizations:

- deepened their knowledge of EPA trade agreements and their potential impacts on family farming and rural development;
- prepared independent regional assessments and related policy positions on the EPAs;
- consolidated an all-ACP family farmers' policy position on the EPAs;
- established a formal dialogue with national and regional counterparts and ACP institutions in Brussels;
- influenced the negotiation agenda, timeline and contents.

The partnership respected the different identities and roles of each actor:

- the process was demand-driven and led by farmers' networks;
- IFAD provided them with financial and technical support;
- FAO provided them with technical information and advice;
- the EuropAfrica NGOs facilitated their access to strategic contacts and information and conducted advocacy in Europe based on the ACP farmers' positions.

2.2 As perceived by people's movements

The small rural producers' platforms and IPs were asked to rate the importance they attach to a number of potential benefits that they might attain through enhanced engagement with the UN system. The results are shown in the following table.

Benefit	ROPPA	Via Campesina	IFAP²⁴	IPs' organizations (5)
Official recognition	high	low	low	high (5)
Access to financial resources	high	only to facilitate presence in global spaces	low	high (5)
Access to technical information to help build/substantiate advocacy positions	medium	medium: the objective is rather to influence the work of the UN experts.	medium	high (3)/medium (2)
Access to global policy space	high	high	medium	high (4)/medium (1)
Facilitating participation in policy dialogue at country/regional levels	high	influencing national governments a high priority, but UN often a weak player.	low	high (4)/medium (1)

ROPPA notes that participation in global events has increased its credibility with national governments. Via Campesina also appreciates the opportunity to gain credibility with governments and public opinion and hopes that engagement with the UN can help it to achieve goals such as international recognition of the rights of peasants. The major benefit that IFAP sees is that of being able to sensitize national governments, donors and international organizations to the essential role of farmers' organizations in developing agricultural sustainability.

The small farmer platforms and IPs were asked to assess how successful they have been in attaining these potential benefits. Both ROPPA and VC pronounce low overall verdicts. ROPPA reports greatest success with IFAD and FAO. The IFAD Farmers' Forum gets particularly high marks since it provides a specific space for PMs to discuss among themselves in preparation for their encounters with the intergovernmental policy forum. Although its relations with the World Bank are confrontational, ROPPA feels that some changes have taken place at national level in WB-funded programmes as a result of the PMs' pressure regarding the impact of structural adjustment on rural economies. Asked to identify the factors that have contributed to successful engagement outcomes, ROPPA cites the fact that it bases its strategy of engagement with the UN strongly on its own vision and capacities; it indeed believes that, for a PO, a firm sense of one's own identity and objectives is the best way to avoid co-optation by other actors. On the side of the UN agencies concerned, their openness to dialogue has been a fundamental factor, along with the dedication of some UN staff. In all cases, engagement has depended on convinced individuals at the beginning. The challenge is to institutionalize the relationship.

Via Campesina cites as the most positive instance of engagement the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) sponsored by FAO and the Brazilian government in 2006. Success factors in this case included FAO's recognition of and support for autonomous civil society space, the equal speaking opportunities offered to PMs, and an effective interaction. The support of a like-minded government was also important (see Box 4). More generally, VC is interested in opportunities to work together with UN entities where its analysis is recognized although not necessarily agreed with. It highlights IFAD's Farmers' Forum and the interactions with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food as good examples.

Box 4

An example of UN-PM global engagement: The International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) Porto Alegre, 7-10 March 2006

Achievements:

- brought the key issue of agrarian reform back into global debate after 25 years of neglect;
- adopted a comprehensive, forward-looking declaration;
- led to national and regional follow-up in Africa, Asia, Latin America.

Quality participation by people's movements – a major success factor – was obtained because:

- FAO respected civil society's autonomous, self-managed space and adhered to transparent interaction in the preparatory process;
- PMs were offered meaningful opportunities to debate with governments;
- IFAD helped fund the parallel civil society forum;
- the Brazilian government was supportive.

Indigenous peoples see the recent adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as one advance that can further the attainment of the benefits cited in the table above. And to a certain degree the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues serves as an arena for attainment of all the benefits listed in the table. One of the respondents noted that after some initial struggles, IPs have been able to use the UNPFII to positively impact some programmes in UN agencies. Also, there have been tangible impacts at community level (e.g. dialogue between Chile and Rapa Nui representatives, resulting in Chilean government recognition of the Rapa Nui Parliament and the subsequent construction of a health clinic). One IP respondent notes that years ago the term “Indians” or “indigenous populations” was used in the UN system, rather than “Peoples” or “Nations” because the States feared the implications. But, over time, discussion of IPs’ cosmovisions and focus on the pragmatic concerns and contributions of IPs to sustainable development and the maintenance of bio-cultural diversity has improved interaction. However, there is still a long way to go.

In short, UN interviewees, particularly those familiar with people’s movements, have many of the same perceptions of the mutual benefits of enhanced interaction as their PM counterparts. If both parties have so much to gain, one wonders why there has been relatively little engagement thus far.

3. Hindrances to be addressed

3.1 As perceived by UN entities

Hindrances to engagement with people’s movements which emerged from the interviews with UN system participants can be classified into three principal categories.

Institutional culture and procedures of UN secretariats

The UN’s intergovernmental culture is strongly ingrained and acts as a barrier to relations with non-State actors according to many interviewees. Bureaucracy is resistant to change, particularly at UN headquarters where a diplomatic mode dominates. The UN institutional culture tends to take a defensive stance against the new language and paradigms introduced by people’s movements. The false perception that “the poor” don’t know how to articulate their needs and the tradition of relying on NGOs as intermediaries to reach them, in the view of these respondents, also act as obstacles to strengthened engagement. Many staff members are not aware of the process of PM structuring that has taken place over the past decade and do not know how to identify these stakeholders or how to reach them. There is a persistent tendency to view POs and IPs as mere “beneficiaries” rather than as actors and invaluable sources of knowledge. Indeed, “scientific” knowledge is generally privileged over local and traditional knowledge, particularly in technical entities.

Existing procedures are also a handicap. Some New York-based entities are bound by ECOSOC accreditation procedures, a long and complicated process which few PMs have managed to navigate. Of the more than 3,000 organizations accredited to ECOSOC, the great majority are NGOs. Although myriad participation practices have been introduced into global policy forums over the past decade, there are few if any formal mechanisms for ensuring that civil society views are actually taken into account by governments when they engage in policy decision-making.

The more field-oriented agencies complain that they lack appropriate instruments for cooperation with POs and IPs. Project, grant and procurement procedures are fashioned with governmental or private sector actors in mind. Respondents from one UN entity express the concern that when they do succeed in developing projects involving POs, they often tend to reinforce those functions of the POs that are most in line with the mandate of their agency – service provision for rural producers – and thus risk influencing the POs’ development and downgrading other important functions that they play (e.g. political advocacy in defense of the interests of rural producers).

Throughout the UN system, top management is not sending sufficiently strong messages about the importance of PO and IP partnerships. Staff who devote time building these relationships are not acknowledged for their efforts. The civil society/people’s movement liaison offices at the UN are universally under-resourced. Several respondents note that the private sector is given significantly higher priority in their respective entities. Territorial silos and competitive behavior within the UN system also work against cooperation and coherence in relations with people’s movements.

Member governments' stances

The policy impact that people's movements (and civil society in general) are able to achieve, some UN interviewees suggest, depends above all on the willingness of governments to take their ideas on board. Some governments are put off by the fact that the civil society organizations present in UN forums are dominantly northern NGOs. Some governments do not listen to the PMs, which represent the poor in their countries, and this makes it more difficult for the UN to champion their cause. Finally, many UN participants note that it is objectively difficult for their entities to deal with some of the political issues that PMs raise.

Uncertainty about PM representativity and concern about their weaknesses

A number of interviewees express uncertainty about the stakeholders PMs represent, how reliably they are connected with the base, how they go about selecting their spokespersons. One group of respondents, however, reported that in their experience the only way to solve the "representational problem" is to start working with people's movements and get to know them better. However, there are concerns that PMs may not always represent the most marginal sectors of the population or constitute effective channels to access local knowledge. Some respondents question the added value of working through structured rural people's platforms as compared with channeling support directly to grassroots groups to help them build up their organizational strength from the base.

A number of other factors that have to do with the nature of the PMs or with their weaknesses are also cited as potential obstacles. Several interviewees note that engagement works best where there are strong, vocal, credible PMs, but this is not always the case. PMs can be connected with political parties or religious factions in some instances. Tensions among different PMs make it more difficult to work with them and weaken their possibility of influencing institutions.

3.2 As perceived by people's movements

Once PMs have decided that they want to engage at the global level with international institutions, they may face a range of hindrances to enhanced engagement.

For instance, VC and ROPPA agree that the UN's administrative and procedural requirements are too complicated for POs. Generally speaking, UN entities fail to take into account the nature and the mode of functioning of POs – requiring outreach to scattered members with little Western/dominant society education – and to provide the necessary support for real consultation to take place.

Many UN officials and government representatives do not seem to understand that what the small farmer platforms are asking is simply that the UN listen to them on their own terms and in their own language. They do not expect the UN to necessarily agree with what they have to say. VC argues that debate in UN forums is often de-politicized by privileging technical terms and, in some forums, by requiring a consensus among civil society constituencies which in fact have very different positions. Inadequate access to UN information and documents is another major handicap for all PMs. For example, although members of the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis have been promoting the development of action plans to tackle the food crisis at national level in the most affected countries, efforts have not been made to adequately inform PM networks so that their national members can approach their governments and solicit involvement.

IFAP notes that engagement with civil society needs to be more transparent and structured, and efforts to facilitate enhanced engagement should include assigning responsibilities to CSOs and providing them with space – including liaison office space – in their institutions.

All the IPs interviewees stated that they are hindered in their international work by a lack of resources and by the need to address urgent crises at local level. They feel that while UNPFII had a strong impact on the adoption of UNDRIP and contributes to networking and alliance building, in order to be effective, it needs more resources and time to implement its objectives. Currently its scant resources are from States, "and if States don't like the issues to be addressed, the resources are moved away, so it must find resources with no strings attached." UNPFII needs resources for supporting more interface activities, including increased access to the General Assembly for the adoption of resolutions. It also needs further resources to help address the global-local gap and regional entities should be established or strengthened. One respondent indicates as an obstacle to effective IPs' engagement the increasing complexity surrounding the criteria for participation in certain UN mechanisms, thereby eroding IPs' confidence in the UN. Regarding the UNPFII, they feel that it generally allows indigenous peoples to express

themselves, but voice concern that States and experts receive more political space than IPs do. This limits the effectiveness of UNPFII's actions regarding IPs' concerns and contributions. Some IPs feel that they have at least *begun* to re-shape the UN system through the creation of the Permanent Forum. "The UNPFII is a new invention, but power struggles between UNPFII and States will still be problematic; we have to be pragmatic and realize that we don't have much force relative to others, and there are limits to what we can accomplish in the UN system." Currently most conflicting positions within the UNPFII are resolved through lobbying and the building of consensus, but there is uncertainty about whether this process can be maintained because the representation of IPs seems to be diminishing due to lack of funding and organizational capacity building in certain regions. Other IPs share concerns about UN agencies privileging individual rather than institutional relationships, which they feel can contribute to the further marginalization of IPs that have relatively little experience engaging with the UN. IPs note further that they are rarely able to participate in determining the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for thematic priorities or modes of interaction with the UN.

Both small farmer platforms and IPs are concerned about the incoherencies they see within the UN system. The rhetoric of "participation" is not matched by budget commitments and political will. Some feel that a further obstacle to engagement is the heavy influence on UN agendas of transnational corporations and large foundations.

One should add that in some instances internal strategic considerations or the political context at the national level can also represent potential obstacles to engagement with intergovernmental organizations.

The final chapter of this publication looks at how to address some of the major hindrances to engagement identified both by UN entities and by people's movements.

Box 5

Shared concerns of people's organizations and indigenous peoples

A number of concerns regarding obstacles to engagement with the UN are shared by small farmers' platforms and IPs, despite their different experiences. Both constituencies feel that in order to be able to participate in UN processes they are subjected to what they term "contortions" regarding:

- their identity, when they are obliged to sort themselves into predetermined categories of CSOs or to "transform" themselves into NGOs to accommodate UN terminology or participation rules;
- their accountability to their constituencies, in cases in which PM leaders are selected by UN entities to participate in UN processes as individual advisors or as "independent experts," rather than as mandated representatives selected by and accountable to their constituencies;
- their modes of functioning, when the UN sets the agenda and imposes the forums, the rhythms, the language used rather than respecting and supporting PMs' own ways of consulting with their members.

4. Bridging the local/global gap

The 2004 Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations,²⁵ chaired by Fernando Enrique Cardoso, laid strong emphasis on bridging the "local-global gap" and recommended that "the UN needs to give top priority to enhancing its relationship with civil society at the country level." UN and PM respondents were asked to respond to this issue, five years after the report's recommendations were made.

4.1 As perceived by UN entities

All UN entities agree that engagement with PMs at the country level is essential to achieve follow-up on the MDGs and implementation of global legal instruments and treaties. FAO interviewees note that ecosystem approaches are the most promising route to combating climate change in the ambit of agriculture, and that pursuing them requires not just global dialogue but engagement with a diverse range of rural communities within each country. For IFAD,

now engaged in mainstreaming and decentralizing its Farmers' Forum process, it is essential that global dialogue translate into concrete change on the ground to avoid consultation fatigue on both sides. Enhancing coordinated country-level programming and implementation is a priority for the UN as a whole. Linking PM engagement to this concern would have tactical advantages.



At the present time, however, UN engagement with people's movements at country level is judged to be very low, for a number of reasons. UN officials lack a civil society culture. Country offices are under-resourced. Direct communication between headquarter offices responsible for global forums and field offices is weak. Despite the rhetoric of participation, the "One UN" process does not always provide guidelines for stakeholder involvement (although IFAD's Country Strategic Opportunities Programme framework does). Governments are sometimes hesitant to open doors to PMs, although the situation is very different from region to region and country to country. The UN's added value is seen as facilitating PM-government dialogue in its role as a neutral and legitimate convenor, but this discrete stance is not always respected.

In follow-up to the Cardoso report on UN-Civil Society relations, UN Resident Coordinators (RC) have been asked to name civil society focal points (43 named as of June 2009) and to establish Civil Society Advisory Committees (in 13 countries thus far). These Committees tended to be self-referential and NGO-dominated in a first stage, but efforts are being made to have them evolve into open dialogue spaces with more PM participation. UNPFII is developing a toolkit and training programmes to assist UN staff in working with IPs at country level. At regional level, although the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has tended to work exclusively with NGOs up until recently, it is now starting to provide support to the regional farmers' networks which have formed a continental platform (see Box 7). IFAD can be seen as making serious efforts to integrate PO participation into programme formulation at national level as it has adopted a tripartite approach which involves government, POs and IFAD. It is also supporting the structuring of regional PO networks as well as the establishment of institutionalized regional dialogue mechanisms between POs and governments.

UN interviewees feel it would be important to find ways of collecting and validating local experience and making the link with international level processes. This might be a shared UN/PM effort, of interest to both parties. Some suggest that the ECOSOC reform could open up possibilities linked to the High-Level Segment, such as PM participation in preparing national voluntary presentations and in regional thematic meetings, particularly within the framework of the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) or the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), but others feel this does not seem to be the case, at least thus far. Reforms in the operations of the Human Rights Council (HRC) may also offer possibilities of helping to bridge the local/global gap, e.g. the recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the Forum on Minority Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There is a general feeling that sub-regional and continental economic organizations, offices and conferences are important relays from country to global levels that are not being utilized sufficiently at the present time. In fact, sub-regional and continental intergovernmental organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) in South America are increasingly important policy forums. The positions that Member States will take in international intergovernmental processes are often discussed in these entities and implementation of global policy decisions that concern the entire region is determined here. PMs are well aware of this and are stepping up their interaction with these bodies. If the UN system could enhance its engagement with PMs at these levels, the gap between local and global would be easier to bridge. Also, the few PM representatives who are able to travel to global UN forums could speak on behalf of regional consultative processes and not just in the names of their own organizations. The push for a coordinated UN system which the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis is promoting in selected countries and at regional level around the "Common Framework for Action" in response to the food crisis is viewed by many as an opportunity for coordinated outreach to civil society and PMs as well.

Box 6**Engaging at country and regional levels: Some positive experiences**

Despite the fact that much more needs to be done to enhance UN-PM engagement at country and regional levels, there is positive experience that can be drawn upon to show what is possible.

- In Senegal, in the mid 1990s FAO pioneered a technical assistance programme directed for the first time at helping peasant organizations understand the issues of structural adjustment and develop their own policy proposals. This programme made a significant contribution to the establishment of the national peasant platform Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux (CNCR) and has since been replicated in a number of other African countries.
- In South America, IFAD is supporting family farmer organizations' engagement in the MERCOSUR Special Commission on Family Agriculture (REAF) leading to the enhancement of dialogue between government authorities and farmers' organizations with important policy advances at regional and national levels.
- In Southeast Asia, UNDP is working with eight indigenous communities to facilitate the inter-generational transfer of traditional best practices in managing natural resources to maintain IPs' bio-cultural diversity and adapt to climate change. These projects have been preceded by five regional and community dialogues that included government representatives and IPs, which identified gaps in national policies regarding natural resource management.

4.2 As perceived by people's movements

IFAP feels there is a deficit in information and communication about how the various UN entities are involving farmers' organizations in their programmes at country level. The first step towards enhanced engagement should be to fill in this gap by doing a survey of projects involving rural producers' organizations. Another problem is that many programmes which should involve farmers' organizations in fact do not so. The FAO Special Programme on Food Security is an example. But information is not enough. Consultative processes at the country level, are required, involving institutional meetings with national authorities. Coordination among UN system entities at country level is insufficient, as is coordinated outreach to civil society/farmers' organizations. IFAP's experience demonstrates that good relations with senior management at the headquarters level do not always translate into changes in the mode of work at country level. Finally, IFAP recognizes that the national/local gap is a problem for rural producers' platforms as well. National farmers' organizations should reach poor people at village level but lack resources to do so.

For ROPPA, the national level is the most important one, and UN-PO engagement is even weaker here than at the global level. ROPPA also emphasizes the growing importance of the regional and continental levels. Like IFAP, ROPPA notes that there is a gap between the apex of UN institutions and the operational people in the field as well as insufficient coordination within the UN system. At the same time, ROPPA has had some successful experiences of negotiation, even with the international financial institutions (IFIs) (e.g. with the World Bank and the Senegalese government on agricultural structural adjustment programmes). POs have formed alliances with their governments on issues like cotton in the WTO and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) negotiations with the European Union, sometimes facilitated by UN agencies (see Box 3). ROPPA feels that the UN agencies should work in the direction of establishing tripartite protocols among government, POs and the UN in their field programmes. West African POs are participating in some (but not all) of the Civil Society Advisory Committees established at the initiative of the UN country teams, but their proposal power is still weak: presence which is not accompanied by capacity building is not sufficient.²⁶ On their side, the POs need to intensify their efforts to sensitize their base, train local leaders, and establish systematic two-way communication. In the context of its global/local cooperation with the FAO, ROPPA cites both bad and good experiences. On the negative side, FAO's Special Programme on Food Security has tended to impose the results of reflection conducted at FAO headquarters regarding strategies to combat food insecurity and has not sufficiently involved the national small farmers' platforms in the countries concerned.

Positive experience is illustrated by the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), which stimulated the African Union to develop continental guidelines on land reform with PO participation funded by FAO (see Box 4).

For its part, Via Campesina notes that the IFIs have more influence on the orientation of policies, strategies and programmes at country level than the UN system does, because of the conditionalities they are able to apply. It argues that on occasion UN agency country offices have used what influence they do have to oppose PO objectives (e.g. the adoption of a law on food sovereignty in the Nicaraguan parliament). Generally speaking, VC notes that the dominant policy scheme is one of imposition from the international level on the national and local. This flow should be reversed, in its view, so that the global level provides support for local and national initiatives in the direction of poverty reduction, sustainable development and defense of human rights.

IP respondents also feel there is a significant gap between the international work and country-level realities. Recognizing that there are funding pressures, there is still concern that at country level there have been what they call “signs of blatant discrimination.” Some country level personnel have been hostile to or have denied IPs entry into their offices, or are ignoring General Assembly resolutions/directives regarding the UN’s work with indigenous peoples. In other cases, they are well meaning but uninformed about IPs and the issues they have brought for decades to the UN system. In addition, some IPs worry about the gap in knowledge about and access to the UN system, with relatively few working at international level to advance local/country-level priorities. Indeed, the UN system demands thorough understanding of increasingly complex and changing interface mechanisms. They call for vigilance so that a few individuals or powerful groups will not be able to “just take ball and run with agencies or other UN entities and leave behind the vast majority of our Peoples.”

The country case studies on Burkina Faso and Bolivia, presented in Chapter 2, provide additional insights to the issues raised above and some suggestions as to how they could be addressed.

Chapter 2

Learning from Existing Experience

1. Global mechanisms for interaction

As described in the preceding chapter, interaction between the UN system and civil society at global level tends to be conducted predominantly by NGOs, who are far better equipped than people's movements to follow international developments and make their voices heard at key forums.²⁷ However, there are examples of mechanisms for ongoing relations between UN entities and civil society where a very determined effort has been made to put PMs in the front row. This section will take a look at four very different mechanisms of this nature and try to identify strong points in each that might be replicated elsewhere in the UN system.

1.1 The International Civil Society Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)²⁸

Establishment and development

The IPC emanated from an autonomous process of networking among civil society organizations starting with the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996. This event provided an occasion to bring together in a single civil society forum a range of CSOs that had been interacting with FAO for some time on various issues related to food and agriculture. One important characteristic differentiated this forum from others held in parallel to the global summits of the 1990s: the organizers took a deliberate decision to ensure that groups representing small food producers from the regions of the South constituted 50% of the delegates empowered to vote on the content of the forum's final Declaration. Following the WFS, FAO adopted a new policy for cooperation with civil society which identified food producers' and consumers' organizations as priority civil society partners.²⁹ A close and supportive relationship with the civil society liaison office of FAO – and with other committed FAO staff – has been a feature of IPC's development since the outset.

The IPC formally came into existence in the preparations for the June 2002 World Food Summit: Five years later. The global Civil Society Forum for Food Sovereignty held in parallel to the Summit adopted a Declaration and an Action Agenda and mandated the IPC to carry them forward. In January 2003, the IPC and FAO co-signed an Exchange of Letters which laid out a programme of work in follow-up to the Summit and the Forum in four priority areas: the right to food, agro-ecological approaches to food production, local access to and control of natural resources, and agricultural trade and food sovereignty. FAO accepted the principles of civil society autonomy and self-organization and pledged to take steps to enhance the institutional environment for relations with civil society, while the IPC acknowledged its responsibility to ensure broad outreach to people's organizations and social movements in all regions and facilitate their participation in policy dialogue.

Identity and functioning

The IPC is an autonomous, self-managed global network of some 45 people's movements and NGOs involved with at least 800 organizations throughout the world. Its membership includes constituency focal points (organizations representing small farmers, fisher folk, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, agricultural workers); regional focal points (PMs or NGO networks responsible for diffusion of information and consultation in specific regions); and thematic focal points (networks with particular expertise on priority issues).³⁰ It is not a centralized structure and does not claim to represent its members. It does not aspire to constitute an all-inclusive civil society interface with FAO and other institutions, but is rather a space for self-selected CSOs which identify with the food sovereignty agenda adopted at the 2002 forum.³¹ The IPC serves as a mechanism for information and training on issues regarding food sovereignty. It promotes forums in which PMs and other CSOs involved in food and agriculture issues can debate, articulate their positions and build their relationships at national, regional and global levels. It facilitates dialogue and debate between civil society actors, governments and other stakeholders at all levels.

The IPC does not have a formal statute or legal identity. It has, however, adopted an agreed consultation and decision-making procedure, including an annual meeting. It periodically establishes working groups to collect information and develop positions on specific themes. Such groups currently exist on agrarian reform, agricultural biodiversity/models of production in a context of climate change, artisanal fisheries, food sovereignty in conflict situations, and global governance of food and agriculture. A minimal IPC liaison office based in Rome acts as the international secretariat of the network. The IPC has given particular attention to interacting with FAO, given this agency's role as focal point for food and agriculture within the UN system.

It is also in close relations with IFAD, which has supported some of its activities. During the first years of its existence, the IPC relied essentially on funds mobilized jointly with FAO to cover its operating expenses and the cost of activities, principally travel costs to bring representatives of PMs to global and regional forums. Over the past few years it has sought to diversify its funding but with limited success thus far.

Major activities

Since 2003 the IPC has facilitated the participation of over 2,000 representatives of small food producers and indigenous peoples in FAO's regional conferences, technical committees and global negotiation processes for treaties and conventions, opening FAO up to voices which were previously absent from its policy forums. This has involved not just mobilizing resources for travel, but also diffusing documentation, conducting training on the issues concerned, supporting the formulation of PM position papers and, on some occasions, organizing parallel civil society forums. In this way, the IPC has facilitated significant contributions by PMs to processes such as the formulation and adoption by the FAO Conference of Voluntary Guidelines on the Application of the Right to Food at National Level in 2004, the 2006 International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and the civil society forum held in parallel to it (see Box 4), the implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the development of specific instruments to defend the interests of small-scale artisanal fisheries in the context of the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries. The IPC is currently supporting advocacy by civil society/people's movements regarding solutions to the food crisis and changes to be made in global governance of food and agriculture, in particular the reform of the FAO Committee on World Food Security.

Strengths and weaknesses

The IPC continues to exist and to function despite minimal funding because it belongs to the PMs/CSOs themselves. It is their own space, which they use to exchange ideas and develop positions on important food and agriculture issues from a food sovereignty perspective. The fact that it is a flexible, horizontal network allows each organization to maintain its own identity. The IPC has proved to be an effective tool to sensitize people's organizations and to mobilize them and bring their voices to bear on UN system policy dialogue. It has developed an interesting approach to relations among civil society sectors, with the PMs maintaining decision-making authority regarding the content and direction of IPC positions, while the NGOs provide analytic and technical support.³²

The IPC's weaknesses are the mirror image of its strengths. Its decision-making processes are slow and cumbersome since it is a world-wide "flat," horizontal network of organizations that do not all speak English and that, in their turn, need to consult with their bases. The IPC's relationship with FAO has not been institutionalized, and this means it can perpetually be put into question. Much less progress has been accomplished in opening FAO up to interaction with people's movements at regional and country levels than in global dialogue. Lack of resources is a major problem, aggravated by the fact that the IPC's successes have created heightened expectations on the part of PMs around the world.

FAO has benefited from engaging with the IPC in several ways in the view of FAO interviewees:

- The quality of its intergovernmental policy dialogue and decision-making has been enhanced thanks to the input and proposals of the small-scale rural producers who are expected to be the main beneficiaries and actors of FAO policies and programmes.
- The IPC has mobilized people's movements and CSOs in support of FAO positions on various occasions, including during the current re-examination of global governance of food and agriculture.
- The IPC has helped to promote the adoption within FAO of innovative technical approaches, like agro-ecological production, which are suited to addressing current challenges like climate change and the energy crisis.

1.2 Farmers' Forum (FF)

Establishment and development

In line with its mission to enable the rural poor people to overcome poverty, IFAD has provided support for community-based organizations of the rural poor since its foundation in 1978. Until recently, however, its relations with farmers' organizations at national, regional and global levels were rare. The idea of establishing a forum to enable structured farmers' organizations to dialogue with IFAD was first voiced in early 2004 in a meeting with the President of IFAD by a delegation of African farmers' organizations. It was discussed in detail at a workshop organized by IFAD in partnership with IFAP, ROPPA and Via Campesina on 14-15 February 2005 as a side event in the context of the IFAD Governing Council. The participants supported the establishment of a Farmers' Forum. They agreed that it should be guided by the principles



of “inclusiveness, pluralism, openness and flexibility” and that it should avoid duplicating existing forums and spaces.³³ A Steering Committee was set up to guide the process. Farmers’ organizations were defined as membership-based organizations of smallholders, family farmers and rural producers, including pastoralists, artisanal fishers, landless people and indigenous people, that are structured beyond the grassroots or community level, at local, national, regional and global levels.

The FF is a co-managed space focused specifically on the farmer organization-IFAD interface. The Steering Committee includes representatives of IFAD and of seven farmers and fisherfolk networks.³⁴ It takes responsibility for planning the global meetings of the FF but does not have oversight of IFAD-farmer organization interaction at regional and country levels. Some of the SC members have requested that it be given more authority and that it be regionalized.

The FF held its first global meeting in Rome in conjunction with the IFAD Governing Council in February 2006. Its second global meeting, held two years later, brought together more than 70 leaders, including pastoralists for the first time. It featured a report from IFAD on progress accomplished in implementing the recommendation of the 2006 meeting³⁵ and thematic working groups on three areas of particular interest to the farmers’ organizations: access to land, climate change, and policy processes regarding smallholder and family agriculture. A synthesis of the deliberations, prepared by the Steering Committee and approved by the FF, was delivered to the IFAD Governing Council.

Identity and functioning

As agreed at the February 2005 workshop, the Farmer’s Forum is:

- “an on-going, bottom-up process – not a periodic event – spanning IFAD-supported operations on the ground and policy dialogue;
- a tripartite process involving farmers’ organizations, governments and IFAD;
- a space for consultation and dialogue focused on rural poverty reduction;
- an instrument for accountability of development effectiveness, in particular in the area of empowerment of rural poor people and their organizations; and
- an interface between pro-poor rural development interventions and the process of enhancing the capacity of farmers’ and rural producers’ organizations...”³⁶

Major activities

The FF is a dialogue and partnership building process and not a structure. As such, it does not undertake activities, apart from the organization of the biannual global forum and some forums at regional level. Its main focus is on bringing farmer organizations’ views and interests to bear on the way IFAD operates, and on strengthening partnerships between IFAD and POs in country and regional programmes. In this context, progress has been made on several fronts since the first global meeting in 2006:³⁷

- Active involvement of farmers’ organizations has increased considerably both in the formulation of IFAD’s country strategies (60% of all cases in 2007) and in project design and implementation (about 33%).
- Direct financial support to farmers’ organizations has increased from seven cases in 2004-2005 for US\$ 2.4 million to 34 cases in 2006-2007 for US\$ 5.84 million and support for farmer organization policy advocacy has been provided at regional and global levels.
- At the level of IFAD policies, empowerment of poor rural women and men is one of the main goals of IFAD’s Strategic Framework 2007-2010 and capacity building for their organizations is stated to be a key instrument to that end.

Strengths and weaknesses

The FF has the advantage of interfacing with a UN entity whose mission is specifically to fight rural poverty, mainly through investment programmes. Its target is more homogenous and its mission more specific than those of IFAD’s sister agency, FAO. Indeed, the FF has managed to keep around the same table a broad range of farmers’ organizations which have very different positions on many issues but share the concern to open up their members’ access to IFAD strategy discussions and investment programme negotiations at the national and regional levels. This achievement can also be attributed in part to the strict application of the principles of inclusiveness and plurality, agreed to by all parties, and to IFAD’s moderating role within the Steering Committee. Another strong point of the FF is the tripartite approach adopted from the outset, involving strong interaction with the member governments as well as the secretariat of IFAD. Finally, the FF has no resource problems since its costs are integrally covered by IFAD.

As in the case of the IPC, one of the FF’s weaknesses is the mirror image of one of its strengths: due to the heterogeneity of the farmer organizations involved and the fact that it is co-managed by IFAD, the FF is not seen and used by the farmers’ organizations as an autonomous space of their own in which to exchange and develop shared analysis and strategies.³⁸ The institutional nature of IFAD makes the FF more suited to address operational rather than policy issues,

since IFAD is a development fund and is not expected to take normative positions. The FF is still an uneven process. More work needs to be done to extend the practice of partnership with farmers' organizations across IFAD's operations at all levels, in different countries, and to develop tools to monitor the impact it has in qualitative terms. Principles of engagement with farmers' organizations need to be finalized and approved by the Executive Board in order to further institutionalize the partnership.

Benefits that have accrued to IFAD as a result of engaging with the FF, in the view of IFAD interviewees, include better quality and greater sustainability of its country programmes, although work needs to be done on how to document this impact, and enhanced legitimacy as an institution dedicated to fighting rural poverty.

1.3 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

Establishment and functioning

Established in 2000 by ECOSOC resolution 2000/22, the UNPFII is an advisory body of ECOSOC that meets annually for two weeks at UN headquarters in New York. Its mandate is to “discuss indigenous issues within the mandate of ECOSOC relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.” It provides “expert advice and recommendations” on indigenous issues to the UN system through ECOSOC; raises awareness and promotes the integration and coordination of relevant activities within the UN system; and prepares and disseminates information on indigenous issues.

The UNPFII is composed of 16 members, eight nominated by IPs and eight nominated by Member States. The Member State governments make nominations according to UN-designated regions, and ECOSOC elects UNPFII members from those nominations. IPs make nominations according to IPs' socio-cultural regions: Africa; Asia; Central and South America and the Caribbean; the Arctic; Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia; North America; and the Pacific. The President of ECOSOC appoints the eight IP members of the UNPFII. All 16 members serve in their personal capacities as independent experts for a three-year term, which can be renewed for an additional term.

The primary observer participants in the annual UNPFII sessions are IPs and their traditional or tribal governance representatives, their organizations (IPOs); non-indigenous CSOs and NGOs; Member States; UN agencies/bodies; intergovernmental organizations and academic institutions. Approximately 1,500 individuals participate annually. IPs or their regional/theme-based caucuses address the UNPFII plenary through oral and written interventions and can thereby make recommendations to the UNPFII itself and to ECOSOC, UN agencies/programmes, Member State governments, et al. The members deliberate and, through consensus, adopt the recommendations to be forwarded to ECOSOC.

The UNPFII is served by its Secretariat (SPFII), in collaboration with the members of the UNPFII. The SPFII is based at UN headquarters in New York, in the Division for Social Policy and Development of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DSPD/DESA). The draft programme of work for each UNPFII session is created by the SPFII in consultation with the UNPFII Bureau (the UNPFII Chair, Rapporteur and four Vice-chairs). The Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues – which is contributed to voluntarily by Member States, foundations and others, and is administered by the Secretary-General via DESA – serves as an important resource for the UNPFII and its work. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) administers a voluntary fund that provides a number of grants to support UNPFII participation by IPs' organization representatives. Also, the Secretary-General administers a Trust Fund for the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous People, which provides small grants to indigenous peoples' organizations doing work related to the objectives of the Decade.

Strengths and weaknesses

The establishment of the UNPFII is without a doubt an historic achievement for IPs after decades of struggle to engage with the UN system. As an advisory body to ECOSOC, it is an entity located at one of the highest levels currently possible within the structural hierarchy of the UN system. It is groundbreaking in that it provides a mechanism in which indigenous-nominated experts sit in parity with Member State government-nominated experts as full-fledged members of a UN body. Also, it allows a range of IPs to bring their voices directly to the UN system as *IPs*, and provides an arena for IPs to engage in conversations with high-level representatives of UN and other intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations and Member States. And it enables IPs to meet and network with one another for cultural exchange and invaluable sharing of ideas for addressing diverse concerns and aspirations. Proactive work that produces tangible results at community level often originates in the conversations and meetings that take place outside of the UNPFII's plenary sessions.



One of the primary drawbacks of the UNPFII is that its members make their decisions by consensus, making it possible for just one of its 16 members to block progress on the most substantive recommendations that could emerge from the UNPFII sessions. However, the SPFII considers consensus to be a strength in that it provides “weight” for urging implementation of otherwise non-binding recommendations. Another challenge is possibly one of educational outreach and community-level perception with respect to whether or not, and how directly or quickly, the UNPFII can respond to urgent concerns (e.g., human rights violations) that IPs raise during its sessions. Regardless of urgency, the recommendations that it forwards through ECOSOC to entities throughout the UN system are, by nature, not binding, and can require a great deal of time to implement. Another challenge with respect to the effective implementation of recommendations is the shortages of funding, qualified staff and institutional capacity to deal with indigenous issues.

An extraordinary amount of effort is expended on the part of the UNPFII members, the SPFII and the observer participants (IPs and their organizations/communities in particular, who sacrifice financially and in some cases risk physical harm or mortal danger for the interventions they make at the UNPFII). Although each session produces a substantial number of recommendations, there is little time, inadequate funding (primarily from a voluntary fund subject to the political leanings of Member State donors) and not enough human resources for the UNPFII to thoroughly assess follow-up and implementation of the recommendations. However, there have been discussions among the UNPFII members about continued measures to address this through a more systematic assessment process.

Some IPs have noted that the IPs'-nominated members of the UNPFII serve in a personal capacity as independent experts, which is in contrast to the representative capacity that many IPs have more familiarity and comfort with when deliberating about their fundamental concerns. On the other hand, the SPFII contends that independent experts are allowed to speak more freely, and “presumably provide the UN system with more honest, open advice than others who are not independent.”

IPs have also observed that at times Member States seem to carry more weight as participants in that they receive preference in speaking order or in the amount of time given to deliver oral interventions. In addition, IPs have observed that UN agencies will sometimes give glowing reports about the work they have conducted regarding (or with) IPs, but the relevant IPs' base constituencies (and UNPFII members who have had opportunity to assess the work of the agencies) have more critical reports about the same work of these agencies. Still, in some cases, the identification of such discrepancies during the UNPFII session elicits verbal commitments from agency representatives to at least examine the gaps and challenges identified, and results in UNPFII recommendations for follow-up.

1.4 Major group mechanism of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

Establishment and functioning

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is a functional commission of ECOSOC established in December 1992 by the UN General Assembly to ensure effective local, national, regional and international implementation of the set of principles and other agreements that emerged from the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or the “Earth Summit” earlier that year. The CSD also provides policy guidance for implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation³⁹ and the Mauritius Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Small Islands Developing States. It meets annually at UN headquarters in New York and also conducts intersessional processes at the regional and international levels.

Agenda 21, the negotiated product of UNCED, is considered to be a comprehensive plan of action for working towards sustainable development. Through an initiative of governments at UNCED and subsequent follow up by the CSD Secretariat, Agenda 21 designated a set of nine major groups or social and economic sectors of society that are critical for the elaboration and implementation of policies for sustainable development. The major groups are: Business and Industry; Children and Youth; Farmers; Indigenous Peoples; Local Authorities; NGOs; Scientific and Technological Community; Women; and Trade Unions. They participate in the intersessional and regular meetings of the CSD as representatives of a diverse range of organizations, often through collaborative arrangements that address the accreditation requirements of the UN. The major group mechanism has inspired some other UN forums related to UNCED. Chapter 23 of Agenda 21 states, “One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of

sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making.” Section 23.3 states, “Any policies, definitions or rules affecting access to and participation by non-governmental organizations in the work of United Nations institutions or agencies associated with the implementation of Agenda 21 must apply equally to all major groups.”

The Major Groups Programme of the Division for Sustainable Development of UN-DESA is responsible for engaging and liaising with major group sectors for optimal participation in the work of CSD and in its intersessional processes. Key major group networks are invited by the CSD Bureau to form a facilitating group called “organizing partners,” which coordinates the preparations and assists the Secretariat in generating and guiding the engagement of stakeholders for each major group sector. The Secretariat chairs the facilitating group and supports its work throughout the preparatory process and the CSD session. A trust fund managed by the Division enables funding of a limited number of major groups’ representatives at each meeting.

Strengths and weaknesses

From the viewpoint of indigenous peoples

Within the context of the CSD, IPs have built strong working alliances with Trade Unions, Women, NGOs and Youth in particular. Key IP participants within the CSD major group mechanism note that IPs and other major groups tend to agree with each other regarding what would make the mechanism (and thereby the CSD) better. The major group mechanism facilitates participation of IPs and others, and generally allows major groups to hear from the CSD Bureau and participating governments in response to their respective concerns. However, they note that the agenda setting is not a bottom-up process, and “whether we get heard or not is always the question; it feels like an on-going experiment.”

Some IPs feel that the major group mechanism’s institutionalization of a formal role for IPs is good because this role provides them with a position from which they can be persistent in drawing attention to the “sliding back” from the commitments made in Rio. Also, post-WSSD, IPs’ position papers are incorporated as part of the formal CSD documentation.

A primary concern of IPs is securing maximum time for interventions, which is at the discretion of the CSD Chair at the time and their level of commitment to effective major group participation. Sometimes major groups are given little speaking time by the Chair of the plenary and by Chairs of the breakout sessions. Several IP organizations have encouraged more spontaneous dialogue for the Dialogue segments of the CSD, facilitated by an “orientation” process so that true dialogue can replace the presentation of prepared statements. But there is a sense among some IPs and the major groups with which they work closely that there might be “agreement” among some Member States and the private sector prior to CSD meetings that maintains the status quo and prevents true dialogue from taking place at the CSD. IPs cited a particular concern in which the thematic focus of the CSD was “Energy and Climate Change,” when interventions by nuclear and mining industries prevented more spontaneous dialogue.

Some IPs feel that major groups are allocated equal dialogue space, but acknowledge that, to varying degrees, Member State governments (and therefore Chairs) give greater political importance and space to certain major groups (e.g., Women, and more recently, Youth). Also, depending on the theme taken up by the CSD in a given year, the Chairs prioritize points that are seen as politically acceptable. One IP participant noted that the positions of IPs are among the more difficult positions to “accept,” particularly that of self-determination, adding, “Governments never ask us questions, but they do ask the other major groups.” Some IPs feel that such imbalances are linked to the financial and “human resource” shortages they struggle against. Since they are sometimes able to send only one person to participate in the CSD delegation, they are understandably hindered in their capacity to participate in simultaneous meetings and to make many interventions. “Because there is usually a small number of IPs, we have less political weight at the CSD session.” Indeed, very few IPs participate in the CSD, partly out of uncertainty as to the tangible, community-level impacts of their participation, and partly due to lack of funds for their participation, and their need to carefully prioritize their engagement with *either* the UNPFII, the CSD, the CBD or other UN forums.

In relation to the broader governance issues of the UN system, IPs are concerned that the agenda seems prepared and that prior agreements might be made in such a way that “even if major groups make a great, innovative intervention about alternative energy possibilities, for some reason it does not wind up in the final CSD report.” However, there are some who feel this is a function of the major groups’ effectiveness in influencing the decision-making process. There was concern among IPs that, with the 2009 focus on agriculture, industrial agriculture

interests might have done prior lobbying. On the surface it would seem that the inclusion of over two dozen references to IPs in the negotiated outcome of CSD-17 (which took place in May 2009) indicates that the CSD can indeed be a forum in which IPs' priorities and contributions are taken into full account. Yet despite the urgency of the climate and food crises and the need to address their underlying causes, the document fails to acknowledge the role of the large-scale, industrial development paradigm in these crises and instead simultaneously promotes it *along with* small-scale, agro-ecological production – a pairing that ignores the long-held positions of IPs and several other major groups.

Finally, a weakness of the CSD mirrors a weakness of the UN system overall: by retaining the “major groups of civil society” framework, it fails to break through the barrier of IPs being obliged to *speak through* a social construct that inaccurately relegates IPs to a *constituency of* a State structure, even though IPs are peoples and nations that constituted themselves long before the formation of Member States and their governments. Much of IPs' impact in the CSD depends on lobbying Member States to speak on their behalf in order to influence what is said from the floor. There is a strong sense among IPs that the CSD cannot fulfill its role as long as it is trapped in its current framework. The “vital role” of IPs does not get adequately reflected in the final reports (e.g., with respect to decisions about water and dams). As a result, IPs feel there is “no real partnership, and IPs don't really have influence on the final outcome; the political weight is not there.”

From the viewpoint of small farmer platforms

IFAP acts as the “organizing partner” for the Farmers' major group. In preparing for CSD sessions, IFAP reaches out to its membership through its regional coordinators.

IFAP notes that a major strength of the major group mechanism is the fact that it really does involve major groups in a significant way. The CSD is well structured. It has clear entry points with speaking slots. In review years major groups intervene almost on an equal footing with governments. The CSD format allows them to meet easily with government representatives and carry out lobbying activities. The Secretariat is well-organized in its outreach to major groups, conducting monthly updates through conference calls. At the same time, IFAP points out that there is no way for major groups to make input into outcome documents except through government delegates. It is also concerned that space for civil society may be shrinking.⁴⁰ IFAP posits that CSD itself is not a powerful policy forum as it is a non-binding consultative mechanism and it does not translate down effectively to the country level. Generally speaking, the CSD suffers from the overall lack of coherence regarding sustainable development among different policy platforms that afflicts the UN system as a whole.

In an earlier stage, Via Campesina shared the organizational responsibility for the Farmers' major groups with IFAP. However, VC withdrew from the process at the time of WSSD in 2002 because it found that divergences among different sectors of the farmers' constituency were too deep to allow meaningful consensus positions to be formulated. For its part, ROPPA notes that the practice of working through international “organizing partners” has had the effect of hampering participation by regional farmers' networks. There is also criticism of the pre-determined categories into which civil society actors are slotted. Although the Secretariat maintains that any constituency can be accommodated within the nine categories, constituencies like artisanal fisherfolk, pastoralists and others prefer to maintain their own identity and networking practices.

See comparative chart of Existing Formal PM-UN Interface Mechanisms in Annex (pages 60-61).

2. Experience at country level

Moving from the global to the country level, this section looks at two studies of UN system engagement with people's movements in Burkina Faso and Bolivia to capture the very different experiences. In the first case small farmer organizations are the dominant form of POs, while in the second IPs constitute the majority.

2.1 Burkina Faso



The rural sector employs 86% of the total population of Burkina Faso. About 40% of the country's gross national product (GNP) is generated by agriculture, animal husbandry, forests and fisheries. Family farms, averaging 3 – 6 ha., are the dominant reality. 88% of the cultivated land is dedicated to producing the cereals which constitute the staple crops of the majority of the population: sorghum, millet, corn, rice and fonio.⁴¹ As in other African countries, the small farmers of Burkina Faso were affected by the structural adjustment policies of the 1990s, which cut back government support for agriculture – with the sole exception of the major export crop, cotton – and opened up the market to competition from low cost food imports. The food crisis uprisings in urban centers of Burkina Faso in late 2007 have shocked the country and its development partners into re-evaluating the importance of promoting national food production rather than counting on the declining benefits of exported cotton to cover the cost of food imports whose prices have surged and are likely to remain highly volatile for the foreseeable future.

Small farmer organizations in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has a long and rich history of dynamic rural associations. Nonetheless, the Peasant Confederation of Faso (Confédération Paysanne du Faso – CPF), a member of ROPPA and of IFAP, is a relatively young organization. Established in 2002, it now groups nine national federations.⁴² Like the other ROPPA national platforms, the CPF functions as a space in which the different federations – each maintaining its own identity and its services to its members – can develop and defend consensus positions on issues of common concern. Its vision is “founded on family farming, linked to the principle of food sovereignty and aimed at a sustainable, productive and competitive agriculture ensuring guaranteed access to land for all producers.” Given the diversified nature of the crops cultivated and the activities conducted by the family farm, the CPF advocates an approach which integrates the specific needs of individual commodity chains with cross-cutting concerns like land tenure, credit, soil fertility and capacity building.

The establishment of a national platform of peasant organizations is recognized as an important evolution although a lot still needs to be done for the CPF to fully realize its potential. Major criticisms of the Confederation are that “it is far from its base” and that “it is not strong and consistent enough in its advocacy.” The CPF is well aware of its weaknesses and is making efforts to overcome them by building two-way communication with local associations and strengthening the farmers' capacity to analyze key policy issues and advance proposals in defense of their interests.

CPF spokespersons feel there has been a positive evolution in their relations with the government but this involvement has not been institutionalized and its modalities are not as effective as they could be. “Often we are invited at the last minute to participate in a meeting about a document we haven't been given time to study.” The annual Peasant Day, during which the President of the Republic dialogues with farmers, is widely cited as an example of the “listening capacity” of the government, but the CPF says it would welcome a system of multilevel dialogue which functions all year long.

The CPF has responded to the food crisis with advocacy objectives reflecting the interests of its members: that government support be extended in 2009 to food crops other than rice;⁴³ that the producers' organizations be given responsibility for undertaking operations like distribution of inputs; and that the guaranteed minimum producer prices be fixed at a level which allows farmers to cover their costs with a margin remaining to be invested in improving their productivity. On World Food Day (16 October) in 2008 the CPF and other CSOs launched a “Campaign for Economic Justice” featuring these claims.

Relations between the small farmer platform and the UN system

A number of UN agencies and programmes work with peasant associations at the village level, but only three have relations with the national Confederation: FAO, IFAD and, to a lesser degree, UNDP. FAO funded a capacity building programme in 2003 which laid a foundation for the newly established CPF by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of its member federations, introducing its leaders to important aspects of agricultural policies, and formulating its strategic framework and communication plan. The CPF greatly appreciated this cooperation, particularly since the Confederation was given responsibility for managing the programme

and the funds and for determining its own capacity building needs. FAO staff feel that the programme was a highly innovative one and that they too learned from it. Despite this positive experience, communication between the CPF and FAO is not as continuous as it could be. FAO staff note that the CPF has not kept them informed about developments since the close of the capacity building project while the CPF says that it has not been informed about and involved in FAO action concerning the food crisis. FAO also works with several of the CPF's national federation members: the pastoralists, the seed producers and the cotton producers. Two current opportunities to strengthen relations with the CPF are the response to the food crisis – where FAO acts as lead agency within the UN Country Team – and the launching of a national food security programme growing out of the work of the FAO-promoted Special Programme for Food Security.

IFAD is collaborating with the Confederation in the context of the Farmers' Forum (see p.18). The CPF has been involved in the formulation of IFAD's country strategic framework (COSOP) and in the design of two projects – one to promote promising commodity chains, and the other to extend small-scale irrigation in support of rice production – but its ability to formulate proposals is limited. An IFAD grant to the CPF has focused on building its capacity for action-research on priority policy issues and strengthening its participation in policy forums and in the implementation of rural development programmes. Up until recently, IFAD has not had a continuous presence in the countries in which it operates, but a field representative has just been assigned to Burkina Faso.

The UNDP programme for natural resource management invites the CPF to participate in the validation and implementation of strategies which it helps the government to develop in areas such as the fight against desertification, biodiversity, and climate change. The quality of the Confederation's participation, however, is affected by its limited technical and analytic capacity and the difficulties it encounters in consulting with its base.

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as the Country Team Task Force created in 2008 to react to the food crisis, work with groups and associations at local level but have not yet contacted the CPF. Yet there is awareness that a strategic dialogue with the national platform of peasant producers' organizations would be opportune in the present situation of heightened attention to the agricultural sector and to family-based farming. WFP, for example, with its new "purchase for progress" programme is moving towards large-scale local food purchase and country staff recognize that the national platform of small food producers would be a key partner in the implementation of this approach.

The Confederation feels that there is a deficit in the circulation of information between the UN and the farmers' organizations and that the culture and practice of involvement of non-State actors in UN-promoted programmes is not yet sufficiently developed. Yet the UN Country Team has made some significant efforts to improve its outreach to civil society over the past few years. A civil society focal point has been appointed within the Country Team and action was taken in 2006 to establish a "Civil Society Consultative Committee" with the aim of informing CSOs about UN agency activities and getting feedback from them. This initiative was less successful than had been hoped for in spite of the good will and dynamism that animated it. The Committee's establishment was strongly piloted by UN staff without leaving sufficient space for CSO initiatives. The terms of the Committee's Statutes created an expectation that the UN would make funds available to cover its operating costs. Furthermore, instead of basing the consultative mechanism on the coordination platforms that CSOs themselves had already established on their own initiative, these organizations were expected to fit themselves into 13 predetermined "categories". The 13 categories – ranging from trade unions to sports associations, marginalized people, peasants organizations, etc. – were so diversified in their interests and capacities that it proved extremely difficult to engage in meaningful dialogue on those occasions on which the UN Country Team invited the Committee to participate in its discussions.⁴⁴

Another UN system-promoted initiative of which the CPF is a member is the National Alliance against Hunger (NAAH), the country-level component of the International Alliance against Hunger launched in follow-up to the WFS:fyI with the participation of the Rome-based UN agencies and some international CSOs.⁴⁵ Like the Civil Society Consultative Committee, the NAAH suffers from a lack of dynamism due, in the view of its national coordinator, to the fact that it has not been able to provide either a politically significant dialogue space (the expectation of the CPF and some other members) or a source of funding (the expectation of the majority).

Learning from experience in Burkina Faso

All parties are aware of the importance of dialogue with civil society and, in particular, with those organizations which represent the majority of Burkina Faso's population and the dominant architects of its food security and its development. At the same time, the practice of consulting and responsabilizing people's organizations has not yet been sufficiently grounded and there is a tendency to read reactions from the base as political opposition rather than as valuable feedback and input into policy processes. This raises a number of questions: How to effectively conduct consultation and strengthen cooperation between the UN system and civil society taking the specific identity and requirements of small farmer platforms fully into account? And how to articulate this dialogue with broader consultation processes involving the full range of CSOs, other development partners and the government itself? Valuable lessons can be learned from the experience of the UN Country Team and its members thus far. The following points may help to trace the way forward.

- The current food crisis and the attention given to the agricultural sector and to family-based farming provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen engagement between the UN system and small farmer platforms.
- In a context in which the government recognizes the need to involve small farmer organizations in dialogue on policies and programmes but encounters difficulties in putting this intention into practice, it is appropriate for the UN system to recognize and assume the facilitating role it can play as an intergovernmental actor.
- Although the final objective is to bring all actors – UN system, civil society, development partners, governments – together within a single framework, there is a role for a specific dialogue space between the UN and CSOs/POs as a stepping stone to multi-stakeholder consultation. The comparative advantage of the UN system, and the rationale for a specific relationship, is its vocation to act as a neutral broker of civil society-government dialogue.
- It is essential to respect the necessary conditions for effective involvement of people's organizations in policy dialogue and programme negotiation. The timely circulation of strategic information in an accessible form is fundamental. The involvement of POs should start with the design of policies and programmes, and should go beyond consultation to agreeing on responsibilities to be assigned to POs. While it is essential to respect the rhythms and modalities of the POs' consultation with their base, it is of great importance to ensure that the necessary resources for it to take place are available.
- It appears preferable to adopt a flexible, results-oriented approach to UN-civil society consultation, avoiding the creation of static formal structures. Consultation will be most effective if it is conducted on a thematic basis with the platforms and consortia which the CSOs themselves have established autonomously. Thematic lines around which the various actors are already organized should be adopted, like the UNDAF axes. To ensure that the POs are not lost in a sea of CSOs, it would be good for the CPF to act as lead civil society organization in the thematic areas of greatest concern to rural producers. The terms of reference of the consultation should be clarified from the outset. Dialogue will be sustainable only if it targets concrete questions of priority interest and helps all parties to work more effectively towards attaining their respective objectives.
- Capacity strengthening for CSOs, and POs in particular, is an extremely important ingredient in building effective consultation. Some UN agencies can provide technical assistance for POs. The Country Team as a whole could undertake to survey civil society capacity strengthening opportunities offered by development partners and facilitate PO access to these resources.
- For UN system-PO engagement to function at country level, it is essential that the headquarters of the various agencies communicate to their field staff the priority that is attached to such engagement and encourage staff to dedicate time and effort to building it. Naming a civil society focal point within the Country Team is a useful initiative, but the effort of outreach to civil society should be a collective one, with each agency acting as lead for the themes and the civil society sectors most relevant to its mandate.
- The small farmer platforms should be proactive in their relations with the UN system; seize opportunities as they arise; and have a clear vision of the objectives of this engagement. Furthermore they should look to the UN not as a donor, but rather as an institution which can help to stimulate reflection on key issues, provide technical assistance and facilitate dialogue with the government.

Box 7**Regional level cooperation in Africa:
Farmers organizations and land tenure policy**

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was a pioneer in reaching out to African civil society during the 1980s under the leadership of Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of the ECA from 1975-1991. The widely acclaimed “African Charter for Popular Participation” was adopted at an ECA-sponsored conference held in Arusha, Tanzania in 1990.

Now, close to two decades later, the ECA is seeking to react positively to overtures from the African regional farmers’ networks which are establishing a Continental Platform⁴⁶ to interface with the African Union and other continental intergovernmental institutions. The development of a framework for land policy and land reforms in Africa, launched by the African Union Commission (AUC) in 2006 with the support of the ECA and the African Development Bank, has provided an occasion to test the terrain for cooperation. The AUC Land Policy Initiative teamed up with IFAD, FAO and others and was able to draw on resources made available by FAO for follow-up to ICARRD in Africa (see Box 4). Drawing on this support, ROPPA organized a workshop which allowed West African farmers’ organizations to discuss in depth the current land tenure issues in the region, and to feed their concerns into the debate.

2.2 Bolivia

Indigenous peoples in Bolivia

Bolivia is a country of vast geographic, biological and cultural diversity within several ecological zones. Its borders extend from the Andes Mountains to the Amazon Basin, and it has a population of approximately 9.7 million, over 70% of which are indigenous peoples from 36 distinct cultures.

Bolivia is particularly rich in mineral and energy resources, having the second largest natural gas reserves in South America. It is also rich in zinc, silver, tin and lithium. It has been subjected to centuries of colonialism, extractive industry interests as well as *haciendas* (large agricultural estates) that expropriated IPs' lands and territories and exploited their labour. And, until recently, a small elite of European descent have monopolized political power.

IPs in Bolivia continue to challenge the economic, social and cultural marginalization that impacts their wellbeing as measured by both conventional poverty indicators and by indigenous standards. They are increasingly significant political actors, but perhaps as a result of their strengthened protagonism, they are increasingly subject to acts of racism and violence by the European and mestizo elite. The extreme neo-colonial racism that persists in the country is rooted in the long and de-humanizing history of the colonial order. Economically advantaged groups that formerly enjoyed broad political power often exploit the deeply entrenched racism.



In the early part of this decade, IPs in Bolivia were at the forefront of two particularly significant social uprisings against un-regulated private interests and neo-liberal economic policies. These uprisings built upon the agenda of IPs' territorial and cultural rights at the heart of the 1990 34-day-long "March for Territory and Dignity" from the Amazon to the highland city of La Paz (Bolivia's administrative capital), and subsequently provided a basis for the current, unparalleled era in Bolivia's history. The "Water War" of 2000 was successful in the expulsion from Cochabamba of the trans-national Bechtel Corporation, which had sought to privatize the municipal water supply during a time of economic collapse and severe social impacts from SAPs. Then, in 2003, the "Gas War" was waged mainly against the government's natural gas export agreements involving foreign oil and gas companies.

The series of mobilizations gave rise to majority demands for the nationalization of natural resources⁴⁷ and for the reconstitution of the Bolivian State through a Constituent Assembly, followed in December 2005 by the historic election of Evo Morales Ayma, the first indigenous President of Bolivia.⁴⁸ The Constituent Assembly convened in 2006 to begin its work, and then approved the new Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia in 2007.⁴⁹ The Constitution adopts a cross-cutting approach to IPs, and also features a chapter on the rights of IPs. Also in 2007, the Bolivian government adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a national law.

Relations between IPs and the UN system

The current UNDP Focal Point for CSOs in Bolivia and the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) Coordinator provided information and reflections about the most recent interface mechanism: the National Council for Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples ("The Council").

Established in Bolivia in December 2006 and spearheaded by UNDP, the Council aims to serve as an inter-agency mechanism to allow consultation at the local level so that IPs can constructively engage with UN programmes and agencies. It also aims to proactively facilitate the participation of IPs at the UNPFII. UNDP put forward proposals for similar councils for dialogue in other countries where a large percentage of the population is composed of IPs (i.e. Ecuador and Guatemala). But the election of an indigenous President in Bolivia as a result of mass mobilizations of civil society and IPs was seen as a uniquely enabling context for the Council, and it was thought that the Council could go further in Bolivia.

The Executive Secretaries and traditional authorities of three of the five major IPs' organizations in Bolivia described their respective organizations' interactions with the UN system and with the Council in particular. Overall, the organizations had little to no direct relationship with UN agencies in Bolivia, and they did not consider the engagement that was allowable with the UN agencies themselves or with the Council to be deep or effective enough to help their organizations achieve their objectives. However, the IPs' organizations have put forward recommendations that human rights issues be discussed at all meetings of the Council. One organization commented on the slowness of the operational process used by the National Council for Dialogue with IPs. And each organization commented that the global-local gap in policy discourse is immense, with very little coordination to discuss or address issues such as climate change, environmental degradation and the food crisis.

One of the organizations noted that when the UN *does* engage directly with IPs, the UN support is such that programmes and priorities of the various IPs' organizations take too long to execute. They noted that the UN invites IPs to coordinate and plan, but they do little to directly help IPs implement programmes that address their needs and priorities, preferring instead to work with NGOs as intermediaries. One organization noted that at UNDP events they have often discussed the need for UN agencies to improve direct cooperation with IPs.

One indigenous leader, very familiar with a particular UN agency, noted, "Unfortunately, it is a bureaucracy in which the ones who profit are the technicians who work there. Those of us who are the most in need receive little to no help. And what little help arrives is in the form of a wheelbarrow that doesn't work well, or toilets, which for these agencies are 'big projects.' These agencies get the signatures of our authorities and with those signatures, they strengthen themselves rather than strengthening us in any meaningful way."

One organization that is particularly noteworthy for its primary objective of strengthening *ayllus*, *markas* and *suyus* (Aymara and Quechua peoples' traditional socio-political structures of local authority) for the exercise of indigenous rights within the framework of Bolivia's new constitution, the UNDRIP and ILO Convention 169, is the National Council of Markas and Ayllus of Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ). In discussing their interactions with the UN system in recent years, they reported that they had met with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people during his 2007 visit to Bolivia. Although they were pleased to be able to directly inform him about the environmental degradation faced by their peoples, they voiced concern that, since that meeting, the UN system has not given them any exact responses or taken any action.

One of the IPs' organizations was appreciative for the support of and participation by the UN system in one of its events related to agriculture. The same organization is only recently trying to coordinate with the UN regarding technical support for the transformation of laws on the basis of Bolivia's new constitution.

Learning from experience in Bolivia

The UNDP Focal Point for CSOs in Bolivia and the RCO Coordinator points out that at the beginning, UN agencies probably underestimated the complexity of the challenges that the Council's creation would entail, especially as IPs are becoming increasingly empowered political actors. For example, although the Council was approved by several UN agencies, there has been unevenness in the agencies' respective levels of involvement in its sessions, and few heads of agencies took direct part in the deliberations of the Council. One agency decided not to join because the Council was being criticized in Bolivia.

The Council was barely active in 2008, meeting only twice that year; the reasons cited for this were the almost year-long absence of a Resident Coordinator (RC), and the political turbulence (e.g., racial/ethnic violence, the referendum) in Bolivia. As a result, all the IPs' organizations interviewed expressed frustration, although they are thankful to the UN system for having facilitated the participation of a robust delegation of IPs from Bolivia to the UNPFII. For the past year there has been optimism within the Country Team about the new RC, who arrived in August 2008 and is reported to be very involved in the Council. The RC has met with representatives of all five of the major IP organizations in Bolivia, each of which has large constituencies.

IPs suggest that the Council provides potential for the UN to become relevant to IPs. It encourages UN agencies to take IPs into account as actors who play a vital role in policy, and to work more directly with IPs. It could also provide support towards the implementation of the new Constitution in Bolivia. However, it currently focuses on the general political level and therefore cannot provide the deeper relationship that IPs seek with the UN system. Also, IPs have noted their concern that, since technical staff usually participate in Council meetings, IPs rarely sit with heads of agencies as their political equals at the table. There is, therefore, a gap in expectations about the Council. The UN agencies expected it to be a mechanism of consultation, while the IPs expect it to be more. Even though government and public institutions usually implement UN projects, IPs for the most part expect the UN to support them more directly, by strengthening their organizations and supporting their public policy priorities. Under the leadership of the new RC, the UN Team is currently working to address this gap.

There is a high level of IPs' leadership, participation and engagement in the meetings of the Council, which indicates that, in spite of IPs' specific criticisms, they value the fact that the UN system plans to interact with them directly. The current political context in Bolivia is favorable to the Council, but technical and other capacities need to be strengthened on both sides to optimize its usefulness. The IP participants' criticisms in promotion of practical change are considered to be useful and are welcomed as the Council moves forward.

A fundamental challenge in Bolivia is that its peoples are besieged by several persistent and severe inequalities, including racial/ethnic discrimination and marginalization. Some interviewees stated, “The UNDP is also part of this,” in that some staff are reluctant to open themselves to relationships with IPs. UN guidelines should stipulate that agencies provide leadership to work directly with IPs and thereby overcome the obstacle of discrimination, including the anti-indigenous discrimination sometimes displayed against IPs by country-level UN personnel.

The IPs’ organizations proposed five specific remedies to improve the effectiveness of UN agencies’ engagement and cooperation with IPs in Bolivia and vice-versa:

- All UN agencies should meet with the IPs organizations, with an emphasis on coordination to address the global-local gap in policy discourse on current and major issues such as environmental degradation, climate change and the food crisis;
- Entities within the UN system should provide specific and timely response or follow-up after engagement with IPs, particularly on issues related to current global crises;
- UN agencies should engage with and provide coordination directly to the beneficiary IPs organizations (rather than with NGOs/other intermediaries), to help strengthen IPs organizations and so they can distribute support according to the needs of their constituencies;
- The National Council for Dialogue with IPs should engage at a deeper and more practical level with IPs;
- To address gender-based marginalization and to engage relatively untapped knowledge, abilities and insights, the UN system should prioritize the strengthening of the leadership skills of women, children and youth.

Chapter 3

Conclusions: The Way Forward

The Introduction put forth an argument: it is crucial, urgent and feasible for the United Nations system to enhance its engagement with people's movements which can legitimately represent those whose lives are most dramatically affected by UN policy deliberations and programmes. The interviews and dialogue reported in the preceding chapters have provided a good deal of evidence in support of this. Positive existing experience of engagement in various parts of the UN system and at different levels has been highlighted, demonstrating that it can be done to the mutual benefit of all parties. The need to decisively tackle the interlinked global crises which the world is facing today – it has been suggested – opens up a strategic opportunity to change the ways in which the UN relates to important but heretofore marginalized constituencies. At the same time, hindrances have been identified which need to be addressed in order to make a qualitative move from often mere consultation, to truly meaningful engagement.

Ideas about the way forward have emerged from the interviews and discussions conducted over the past 18 months. The proposals presented in this concluding section are not recommendations in the formal sense, since they have not been validated as such by the participating UN entities and people's movements. They do, however, have the value of being the product of a thoughtful, multilevel and iterative process of dialogue.⁵⁰

They aim at complementing the UN's extensive relations with NGOs in a more balanced approach to civil society as a whole. In the words of one UN respondent, "The strategic question is how can people's movements play a role of political leadership in the diversified partnership of the UN system with CSOs and in the triangular partnership of States/Civil Society/UN system?" The ideas developed below should be considered with this goal in mind.

1. Basic principles for engagement

There are significant differences among both UN entities and people's movements. No single model of engagement could possibly be universally applicable and it would be counterproductive to try to enforce one. Nonetheless, the following set of guidelines is felt to be valid for situations of UN engagement with people's movement generally. All of them derive from the concrete experience of one or more UN entities, have been shown to enhance the quality of interaction to the mutual benefit of the UN and the PMs concerned, and are felt to be applicable to all levels of the UN system's work – from global to regional and national.

Mutual recognition

Engagement with civil society and people's movements is enshrined in the UN Charter

The UN's Charter and its mission to defend human rights constitute the overarching principle on which its engagement with CSOs and people's movements is founded.

Social actors have a right to influence decisions that affect their lives

Representative and participatory democracy are distinct and complementary. Social actors can and should be enabled to influence policy decisions that affect their lives, without putting into question the sovereignty of States and their decision-making responsibilities.

A "bi-directional" relationship

People's movements should be seen as equals in their relationships with the UN system, not simply as "beneficiaries." The partnership should be "bi-directional" in all of its dimensions, including that of capacity strengthening: both parties have something to give and something to receive. Both parties are mutually accountable for maintaining their commitments.

Rights and obligations of the parties in dialogue

The UN system has the responsibility to create space for the voices of people's movements

In its relationships with non-State actors, it is the responsibility of the UN system – acting in defense of common goods, human rights and global equity – to ensure that the voices of people's movements representing marginalized constituencies are heard, and to create safe spaces and mobilize resources for policy debate.

The autonomy and right to self-organization of CSOs should be respected

The heterogeneous nature of “civil society” needs to be recognized in order for meaningful dialogue to take place. It is up to CSOs to determine autonomously how they wish to organize themselves in their interaction with the UN system. It is important to acknowledge the specific legitimacy of people’s movements and indigenous peoples, deriving from the fact that they represent and have a mandate to speak for constituencies or nations which are among those most affected by UN policies and programmes.

“Policy decision-making is the exclusive prerogative of the intergovernmental sphere. The roles of CSOs are to present views and analysis which can help governments to take sound decisions and to hold them accountable for the implementation and the impact of their decisions. In order to maintain this clear distinction, civil society’s autonomy and right to self-organization must be respected. Intergovernmental entities are advised to encourage CSOs to form networks and to caucus in preparation for intergovernmental forums. But the responsibility for determining the form and the functioning of the networks and for selecting civil society spokespersons must rest with the CSOs themselves.” (FAO, Committee on World Food Security, CFS 2008/5, para. 22)

People’s movements should, themselves, practice transparent governance

It is the responsibility of people’s movements to practice transparent governance and to seek to build effective two-way communication with, and accountability to, their bases. They should be ready to document these practices to their UN system interlocutors.

Necessary elements of a meaningful dialogue

Meaningful engagement, not window-dressing

In order to promote truly meaningful engagement of people’s movements, a number of elements should be taken into consideration: ensuring their timely access to strategic information; ensuring the engagement of PMs in the design of policies and programmes from the onset; maintaining continuity in the relationship; respecting their languages, agendas and consultation practices; and jointly making every effort to ensure that the necessary resources are available to fulfill these requirements. The ever present issue of resource mobilization needs to be addressed, and part of the answer may be found with member governments, development partners present in the country, NGOs, foundations and budgets of specific projects and programmes. However, the resources need to be managed with the participation of the PMs themselves.

Co-convened spaces

The rationale, timing and expected outcomes of any consultation/dialogue should be specified from the outset. Co-convened and co-managed UN-PM interface spaces should operate according to agreed criteria and should be inclusive and pluralistic within the terms of these criteria. PMs should have an autonomous space to consult among themselves before interacting with intergovernmental forums. In addition, it is important to ensure that consultation processes are part of a long-term strategy rather than done on an ad-hoc basis.

“The Farmers’ Forum process will always be guided by the principles agreed upon three years ago: mutual respect, pluralism, openness, inclusiveness, transparency, and promotion of mutual recognition of the autonomy and independence of farmers’ organizations. These principles should also guide the producers’ organizations in their relation with their members, assuring their accountability to them.” (IFAD, Synthesis of the deliberations of the second global meeting of the Farmers Forum 2008)

Practice coherence at all levels

UN entities should apply these principles in a coherent manner in their approaches to people’s movements at national, regional and global levels. All parties will benefit from the sharing of best practices amongst UN entities.

2. Strengthening national level engagement

Outreach has so far tended to privilege the global level; however, consensus shared among all respondents deem it necessary to build from the bottom up. Awareness raising efforts among UN country teams and national governments may help them have a better grasp on the benefits of interaction with people's movements, while capacity building may also be needed to help in developing effective consultation methodologies. National people's platforms could benefit from enhancing their understanding of the impact of global challenges on their local concerns and the importance of engaging with the UN. They will need support to effectively communicate with and represent local people's associations and to craft proposals that defend their interests. National NGOs may have to adjust to the increased protagonist role of people's platforms and IPs, and to recognize the different identities and the complementary roles of different kinds of civil society organizations.

Among the many insights expressed during the interviews and the lessons emerging from the country visits, the following merit underlining.

The current crises create an opportunity

The current crises of food, global finance, climate change and environmental degradation and the renewed attention directed to smallholder food production and to agro-ecological approaches and traditional knowledge provide a unique opportunity to strengthen the UN system's engagement with people's movements, including small scale food producer platforms and IPs.⁵¹ Strategic discussions could help these constituencies address issues of bridging the local-global gap in policy discourse and action programmes. In countries where the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis is operating, it could play a role in promoting such consultation. Involvement of people's movements at country level can be facilitated by their participation in relevant global forums. The reformed Committee on World Food Security could exemplify such a global participation mechanism in the sphere of food and agriculture.

The UN system has a comparative advantage to facilitate dialogue

In national contexts in which the government recognizes the need to involve people's movements in dialogue on policies and programmes but encounters difficulties in putting this intention into practice, the UN system is well placed to assume a facilitating role. The UN system could promote tripartite engagement among governments, UN entities, and civil society actors in its policy forums and programmes. The UNDAF methodology should be reviewed to make provision for stakeholder involvement, building on the experience of the IFAD Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP).

Strong messages from headquarters are essential

For UN system-PM engagement to function at country level, it is essential that the headquarters of the various agencies communicate to their field staff the political priority that is attached to such engagement and encourage and support staff for dedicating time and effort to building it. The High-Level Task Force's members have agreed that there should be more space for people's movements to be involved in policy dialogue and programming and have undertaken to encourage their field staff to promote such interaction.

The role of the UN Country Teams (CTs) is fundamental

The role of the CT civil society focal points should be reinforced so that they can help people's movements find entry points to the UN system. Spaces should be created in which Resident Coordinators and their teams can reflect on the changing political realities and paradigms of development and the need to open more space for people's movements. The HLTF is seeking to provide such spaces in the countries in which it operates. Induction briefings for Resident Coordinators and Cluster Meetings bringing together RCs in the same geographic area also offer occasions for sensitization.

The regional level: An unexploited space

Results from the case studies suggest that, in general, the regional level is an important and neglected terrain in the UN system's efforts to build from local to global in its engagement with people's movements and civil society. Better ways of relating to new movements that are emerging at this level – as many PMs and civil society organizations are becoming more and more active at this level – are needed. Regional meetings bringing together UN system entities and PMs could provide such a forum. A mapping of institutional possibilities for regional interaction could also be undertaken (e.g. Regional Economic Commissions, Regional Conferences of FAO and other entities, etc.), identifying what would need to happen for these engagement possibilities to be exploited and for links to be built between country, regional and global levels.

3. Strengthening global engagement

As suggested earlier, UN system engagement with people's movements should build up from the country and regional levels to the global with links that are both dynamic and bi-directional. In order for engagement to become institutional and systemic, it has to be incorporated in the overall governance policies and practices of UN entities.

Extend the engagement process

In order to deepen awareness of the benefits and requirements of engagement with PMs, activities targeted for staff and to member governments of UN entities should be undertaken, and people's movement representatives themselves should be the major awareness builders.

- Interested UN entities should investigate the quantity and quality of their engagement with people's movements, within the broad category of civil society in general. These investigations would benefit from involving major PM actors relevant to the work of the entity. They should identify steps that need to be taken both by the UN entity and by the people's movements to apply the principles and enhance engagement. Proactive outreach should be made to key constituencies whose participation is limited. UN-HABITAT has expressed interest in documenting and further developing its interaction with slum dwellers, and UNEP with indigenous peoples and farmers.
- Joint efforts by UN system members could be undertaken to develop monitoring and evaluation systems which can document the difference that partnerships with PMs make in combating poverty and promoting sustainable development approaches. IFAD is already making efforts in this area.
- Some UN agencies have developed ways to engage people's organizations in the workings of their governing bodies. For instance, within the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the position of NGO Delegates on the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board is important for the effective inclusion of community voices in the key global policy forum for HIV and AIDS. Civil society delegates on the Board represent the perspectives of people living with HIV/AIDS within UNAIDS policies and programming.

Take advantage of UN system-wide attention to addressing the food crisis and other global challenges

Current efforts to redesign global governance of food and agriculture in response to the food crisis provide a strategic opportunity to promote mechanisms enabling people's movements to effectively contribute to intergovernmental decision-making and the monitoring of results. The current reform of the Committee on World Food Security is examining options in this sense, with participation by PMs and other CSOs in the "contact group" responsible for formulating a reform proposal. It is important that whatever solution for a global policy forum is adopted makes adequate provision for linking the country, regional and global levels and for meaningful participation by PMs.

- Now more than ever before is it important to "put together the pieces" of UN system policy dialogue impacting on food and agriculture. It could be useful for the civil society officers of relevant UN system entities to brainstorm with concerned PMs on how to enhance synergetic PM input into the overall process of deliberation on responses to the interlinked crises. On the UN side such an exercise should include not only the core food agencies, FAO-

IFAD-WFP, but also such entities as UNEP, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and others. Within the CSD, it is important to recognize the role that indigenous peoples play in dealing with climate change and other global concerns on the CSD's agenda. Attention should be given to the position that IPs hold, their priorities and their contributions.

Assess and enhance the impact of human rights mechanisms

- Human rights discourse and mechanisms have been an exceptionally fruitful avenue of engagement between IPs and the UN system and have begun to be applied more broadly to economic and social rights, including discussions surrounding the right to food, and to development approaches generally. Undertaking assessments of the degree to which the recommendations made by human rights mechanisms in which IPs and CSOs play an important role are actually applied at country level could be helpful in identifying obstacles and suggesting how they might be overcome. These assessments could include the UNPFII recommendations, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the FAO Guidelines on the Voluntary Application of the Right to Food at National Level.
- Up until now, with the exception of the IPs for whom the human rights mechanisms have been fundamental, not many PMs themselves seem to be interacting directly with the human rights mechanisms. It could be useful to examine the reasons for this relative absence and means of overcoming it and to identify important PM goals that could be pursued following a human rights approach, such as the recognition of economic and social rights in areas like food sovereignty and the rights of peasants, including resource access and land tenure. The recent OHCHR publication, *Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society*, is a valuable resource.

Improve communication and sharing of experience

- Building exchange and synergies among UN entities in their outreach to people's movements is essential. Networking and joint reflection among senior management of various UN entities should be reinforced in order to form a nucleus of "change agents" within their institutions. A shared knowledge base about people's movements might be built up, for all to draw upon. A full inventory of processes that involve PMs could be prepared.
- In its efforts to build communication, consideration should be paid to meeting PMs at least half-way in terms of the language adopted, the time frames, the contexts, rather than expecting encounters to take place solely on UN "terrain." Space should be created for discourse that is alternative to what people are used to hearing within the UN system.
- On the side of the PMs, communication and access to information and analysis are vital if they are to move beyond mere presence to proposals and advocacy. PMs need to obtain strategic information on UN processes and programmes in accessible form and on a continuous basis at all levels. NGOs can play an important role in these areas, as the IPC and the EPA experience illustrate, on condition that they respect the different identities and prerogatives of PMs and NGOs.

A final word

Promoting networking and facilitating a community of practice among UN entities in their relations with civil society is at the core of NGLS's mandate. For this reason, NGLS facilitated the dialogue between the UN system and people's movements that has led to this publication. NGLS will continue to encourage engagement with these constituencies, building on the existing good experiences and the proposals presented in these pages, aiming to offer space to civil society voices that are not yet fully at home in the global system. This is a work in progress and might be extended to other groups and issues.

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Annex I

Organizations/entities involved in individual and collective interviews

Rural producers' organizations

Global networks

International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)
International Movement of Catholic Agricultural & Rural Youth (MIJARC)
Via Campesina (VC)
World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF)
World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

Regional networks in the global South

Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development
Confederation of Family Farm Organizations of MERCOSUR (COPROFAM)
Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa
Regional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC)
Association of Caribbean Farmers (WINFA, member of VC)

National organizations in the global South

Association pour le Redynamisation de l'Élevage au Niger (AREN, member of CNPFP/N and IFAP)
Asociación de Trabajadores del Nicaragua (member of VC)
Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura, Brazil (CONTAG, member of COPROFAM)
Confederación Nacional de Mujeres del Campo (CONAMUCA, Dominican Republic, member of VC)
Confédération paysanne du Faso (member of ROPPA and IFAP)
Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du Mali (member of ROPPA and VC)
Coordination Nationale de la Plateforme Paysanne du Niger (CNPFP/N, member of ROPPA and VC)
Farmers Organization Network in Ghana (FONG, member of ROPPA and IFAP)
Fédération des Unions de Producteurs de Bénin (FUPRO, member of ROPPA and IFAP)
Federación de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia (FNMCB, member of VC)
Indonesian Peasant Union (member of VC)
Movimiento de los Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra, Brazil (MST, member of VC)
Mtandao wa Vikuni vya Wakulima Tanzania (MWIATA, member of IFAP and VC)
UNORCA, Mexico (member of VC)

Indigenous peoples

Center for Organization, Research and Education (CORE) Manipur – northeast India
Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Originarias Campesinas "Bartolina Sisa" – Bolivia
Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) – Bolivia
Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ) – Bolivia
Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA)
Indigenous Environmental Network – North America
Maiinyoito Pastoralists Integrated Development Organization (MPIDO) – Kenya
Manxinerine Yoptowaka (Encuentro de Manxinerine) – Peru, Bolivia and Brazil
Na Koa Ikaika O Ka Lahui Hawai'i (Strongest Warriors of the Nation) – Hawai'i
The Sámi Parliament of Sweden
Tebtebba – Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education

UN entities

Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN – FAO
International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS – UNAIDS
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs – DESA:
• Executive Office of the Under-Secretary-General
• Division for Sustainable Development
• Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination
• Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
• NGO Unit
United Nations Development Programme – UNDP
UN Economic Commission for Africa – ECA
United Nations Environment Programme – UNEP
United Nations Programme on Human Settlements – UN-HABITAT
UN Millennium Campaign
United Nations Industrial Development Organization – UNIDO
UN/Office of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States – OHRLLS
United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues – UNPFII
UN Country Teams in Burkina Faso and Bolivia

Annex II

Existing formal interface mechanisms between the United Nations entities and people's movements (PMs)

Name	Creation	Management	Participants	Selection of participants
International Civil Society Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)	2001 (process initiated in 1996)	PMs/NGOs autonomously	Representatives of global and regional rural PM networks (peasant farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, IPs, etc.) and selected NGOs as technical advisors	PMs/NGOs autonomously
Farmers' Forum (FF)	2006 (initiated in 2004)	PMs and IFAD Steering Committee	Representatives of global and regional rural PM networks (small farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, IPs, etc.)	PMs/IFAD Steering Committee
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)	2000 (inaugural session in 2002)	UNPFII Secretariat in collaboration with UNPFII members	16 members as independent experts: 8 IPs representatives and 8 Member State representatives "Observer" participants are citizens of IPs/ Nations and their organizations; NGOs/CSOs; Member States; other UN intergovernmental organizations; academic institutions, etc.	Member State governments nominate and ECOSOC select 8 members IPs nominate and ECOSOC President appoints 8 Members Observers register via Secretariat
Major Groups (MGs)	1992 (Agenda 21)	Division for Sustainable Development of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and MG organizing partners	9 MGs, including a MG for farmers, a MG for IPs and a MG for workers and trade unions	MG organizing partners are self-candidated and confirmed by CSD Bureau Funded participants selected by organizing partners

Agenda setting	PMs' partners in dialogue	Levels of functioning	Funding
IPC negotiates with FAO	FAO Secretariat and Governing Bodies; IFAD Secretariat	Global and regional	Extra-budgetary mobilization in consultation with FAO
PMs/IFAD Steering Committee	IFAD Secretariat and Governing Body	Global, regional, national	IFAD
Draft programme of work for UNPFII annual session prepared by Secretariat in consultation with UNPFII	Observers/ their caucuses address Forum and make recommendations; Forum members adopt recommendations by consensus and forward to ECOSOC	Global, regional, national	Voluntary Trust Fund administered by UN-DESA for implementation of ECOSOC-approved UNPFII recommendations Observers apply to a Voluntary Fund administered by OHCHR for participation
CSD	Division for Sustainable Development of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and Member State governments	Global	Minimal travel costs are covered by CSD. The rest is self-funded by PMs.

Acronyms

ACP	Africa Caribbean and Pacific
AMR	Annual Ministerial Review
AREN	Association pour le Redynamisation de l'Élevage au Niger
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BWIs	Bretton Woods Institutions
CBD	Convention on Biodiversity
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CNCD	Centre National de Coopération au Développement
CNCR	Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux
CNPFP/N	Coordination Nationale de la Plateforme Paysanne du Niger
COICA	Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica
CONAMAQ	Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu
CONAMUCA	Confederación Nacional de Mujeres del Campo
CONTAG	Confederaçiao Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura
COPROFAM	Confederation of Family Farm Organizations of MERCOSUR
CORE	Center for Organization, Research and Education
COSOP	Country Strategic Opportunities Programme
CPF	Peasant Confederation of Faso (Confédération Paysanne du Faso)
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSUTCB	Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia
CT	Country Team
DCF	Development Cooperation Forum
DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DSPD	UN Division for Social Policy and Development/DESA
EAFF	Eastern African Farmers Federation
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreements
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FEB	Fédération des Eleveurs du Burkina
FENAFERB	Fédération Nationale des Femmes Rurales du Burkina
FENUGGF	Fédération Nationale des Unions et Groupement de Gestion Forestière
FEPAB	Fédération des Professionnels Agricoles du Faso
FF	Farmers' Forum
FNJPAF	Fédération Nationale des Jeunes Professionnels Agricoles du Faso
FNMCB	Federación de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia
FNPB	Fédération Nationale des Producteurs de Bananes
FONG	Farmers Organization Network in Ghana
FUPRO	Fédération des Unions de Producteurs de Bénin
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GNP	Gross National Product
HLTF	High-Level Task Force
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICARRD	International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFAP	International Federation of Agricultural Producers
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPs	Indigenous Peoples
IPC	International Civil Society Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
IPOs	Indigenous Peoples Organizations
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
MAHRH	Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Hydraulique et des Ressources Halieutiques du Burkina Faso
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur
MIJARC	International Movement of Catholic Agricultural & Rural Youth
MPIDO	Mainyoyito Pastoralists Integrated Development Organization
MST	Movimiento de los Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra, Brazil
MWIATA	Mtandao wa Vikuni vya Wakulima Tanzania
NAAH	National Alliance against Hunger
NGLS	Non-Governmental Liaison Service

NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHRLLS	UN Office of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
PMs	People's Movements
POs	People's Organizations
PROPAC	Regional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
REAF	MERCOSUR Special Commission on Family Agriculture
ROPPA	Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa
SACAU	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SC	Steering Committee
SPFII	Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UMAGRI	Southern Africa and Union Magrèbine des Agriculteurs
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNORCA	Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas
UNPCB	Union Nationale de Coton du Burkina
UNPFII	United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
UNPRB	Union Nationale de Producteurs de Riz du Burkina
UNPSB	Union Nationale de Producteurs de Semences du Burkina
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VC	Via Campesina
WB	World Bank
WFF	World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers
WFFP	World Forum of Fisher Peoples
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit
WGIP	Working Group on Indigenous Populations
WHO	World Health Organization
WINFA	Windward Islands Farmer's Association
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

Endnotes

1. “People’s movements” is used in this document as an overall term, however imperfect, embracing both people’s organizations and indigenous peoples (see Box 1). The plural “indigenous peoples” (IPs) is the appropriate term used throughout this document and throughout the UN system, signifying that indigenous peoples are subjects of international law who possess both individual human rights and collective rights.

2. McKeon, Nora. 2009. *The United Nations and Civil Society. Legitimizing Global Governance – Whose Voice?*. Zed Books, London and New York.

3. Led by Nora McKeon, with Carol Kalafatic taking responsibility for indigenous peoples.

4. The HLTf is chaired by the Secretary-General and co-chaired by the Director-General of FAO. It is composed of the heads of the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes, Bretton Woods institutions, relevant parts of the UN Secretariat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). See High-Level Task Force (HLTf) on the Global Food Security Crisis. 2008. *The Comprehensive Framework for Action*. www.un.org/issues/food/taskforce/Documentation/CFA%20Web.pdf, accessed on 30 September 2009.

5. See Annex for the complete list of organizations interviewed. This illustrative approach is adopted since, unlike indigenous peoples, small farmer platforms do not have a consolidated common history of engagement with the UN system.

6. See www.ifap.org.

7. See p. 17.

8. See p. 21.

9. See p. 18.

10. See www.viacampesina.org, Demarais, Annette Aurélie. 2007. *La Via Campesina. Globalization and the Power of Peasants*. Pluto Press, London. Edelman, Marc. 2003. “Transnational Peasant and Farmer Movements and Networks.” In Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier and Marlius Glasius (eds.), *Global Civil Society*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

11. Food sovereignty emphasizes the right of peoples and countries to define agricultural and other related policies which they feel are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It gives primacy to people’s rights to food and to produce food over trade concerns. It prioritizes production for local consumption and includes the right to support and to regulate national production and to shield the domestic market from the dumping of agricultural surpluses and low-price imports from other countries. It emphasizes access by landless people, peasants, and small farmers to land, water, and seeds, credit and adequate public services and investments. See www.nyeleni2007.org.

12. See www.roppa.info. See also McKeon, Nora, Michael Watts and Wendy Wolford. 2004. *Peasant Associations in Theory and Practice*. Civil Society and Social Movements Paper No. 8. UNRISD, Geneva.

13. Regional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC) for Central Africa, Eastern African Farmers Federation (EAFF) for East Africa, Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) for Southern Africa and Union Magrébine des Agriculteurs (UMAGRI) for the Magreb.

14. See www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/history.html.

15. Oviedo, Gonzalo, Luisa Maffi and Peter Bille. 2000. *Indigenous and Traditional Peoples of the World and Ecoregion Conservation: An Integrated Approach to Conserving the World’s Biological and Cultural Diversity*. World Wildlife Fund For Nature (WWF), Gland, p. 9. However, 370 million is a minimal figure as African States have begun to recognize indigenous peoples. See, e.g., the *Report of the African Commission’s Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities* (submitted in accordance with the *Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa* adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights at its 28th ordinary session), which recognizes the Ogoni, Batwa, Masai, and other indigenous peoples. www.iwgia.org/sw2186.asp, accessed on 25 September 2009.

16. See also United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). 2004. *The Concept of Indigenous Peoples*. Background Paper prepared by the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Workshop on Data Collection and Disaggregation for Indigenous Peoples, New York, 19-21 January. UN Doc. No. PFII/2004/WS.1/3. www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/workshop_data_background.doc, accessed on 30 September 2009.

17. The UN Charter, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) affirm the fundamental importance of the right of self-determination of all peoples. Article 1 in common of the ICESCR and the ICCPR states, “All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” The Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the two monitoring bodies for the International Covenants) have applied the right of self-determination to IPs.

18. The Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights was one of the main subsidiary bodies of the UN Commission on Human Rights, which was replaced by the Human Rights Council in 2006. See United Nations

Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS). 2008. *The United Nations Human Rights System: How to Make it Work for You*. NGLS, Geneva.

19. See International Labour Organization (ILO). 1989. *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention C169*. 27 June. www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C169, accessed on 30 September 2009. See also ILO. 1957. *Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention*. C107. 26 June. www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C107, accessed on 30 September 2009.

20. See, e.g. Part II. Land, Article 13 (1) of ILO Convention C169, which states, "In applying the provisions of this Part of the convention governments shall respect the special importance for the cultures and spiritual values of the peoples concerned of their relationship with the lands or territories, or both as applicable, which they occupy or otherwise use, and in particular the collective aspects of this relationship."

21. United Nations Development Group (UNDG). 2008. *United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues*. www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/docs/guidelines.pdf, accessed on 30 September 2009.

22. The UNDRIP was drafted by the WGIP in 1992, and adopted by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. After receiving the draft, the Commission on Human Rights established the Working Group on the Draft Declaration, an inter-governmental body that negotiated the final version of the draft from 1995 to 2006. The Human Rights Council (the successor to the Commission on Human Rights) adopted it on 23 June 2006. It was then revised and adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007 (A/Res 61/295).

23. "EuropAfrica: for mutually supportive and sustainable agricultures in the North and the South of the world" is a civil society campaign launched in 2005 that connects African farmers' networks and European civil society organizations to link, reflect and act together on major current issues concerning food and agricultural policies, trade and development cooperation. For more information, see www.europafrika.info/en/chi-siamo, accessed on 25 September 2009.

24. IFAP considers that all of these areas are important, but in some, it would be difficult to further enhance the benefits already obtained.

25. United Nations (UN). 2004. *We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance: Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations*. UN Doc. No. A/58/817. 11 June. www.un.org/docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=a/58/817, accessed on 30 September 2009.

26. See country case study on Burkina Faso, pp 24-27, for an illustration of this issue.

27. Many of the NGOs which interact regularly with the UN system communicate easily in English, are well-connected via Internet, have reasonably good access to UN documents and have at least some human and financial resources to dedicate to following UN dossiers and developing their own analyses and positions. Some even have offices in New York or Geneva. Few if any PMs benefit from such conditions.

28. See www.foodsovereignty.org. McKeon (2009) provides a detailed case study on the IPC and its interaction with FAO. See also Borras, Saturnino M. Jr. 2008. "La Via Campesina and its Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform." *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 8, No. 2 and 3, April and July, pp. 258-289.

29. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 1999. *FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations*. FAO, Rome.

30. The focal point members of the IPC were originally self-selected by regional caucuses and constituencies at the time of the 2002 forum. Since then they have periodically been renewed, always following criteria which ensure at least three-quarters representation of PMs as compared with NGOs and of Southern organizations as compared with Northern. The NGO thematic focal points are identified in function of the issues on which the IPC decides to focus.

31. In IPC's view it is to be hoped that facilitation mechanisms similar to the IPC will be established by CSOs which identify with approaches other than food sovereignty, as well as by other actors such as the private sector, since this would enhance dialogue among different sectors concerned with food and agriculture issues and with the UN system.

32. The PM focal point members of the IPC decide what issues and processes to focus on. The NGO thematic focal points, functioning as technical advisers, are asked to collect and diffuse documentation on these issues and to help develop draft position papers working under the supervision of steering committees composed of PM focal points.

33. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). 2008a. *Partnerships in Progress*. Report to the global meeting of the Farmers Forum in conjunction with the 31st Session of the Governing Council of IFAD, Rome, 11-12 February.

34. IFAP, VC, ROPPA, Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development, Coordination of Family Farms of MERCOSUR, World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers, and World Forum for Fisher Peoples.

35. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). 2006. *Report of the meeting of the Farmers' Forum in conjunction with the Twenty-Ninth Session of IFAD's Governing Council*. Rome, February 2006.

36. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). 2005. *Towards a Farmers' Forum at IFAD's Governing Council. Workshop Report*. Rome, 14-15 February.

37. See IFAD (2008).

38. Indeed, the FF was not designed for that purpose, but rather to create an interface between FOs and IFAD. Most of the FOs represented in the SC do not consider the FF should represent an autonomous space of their own. They suggest there are other places for this.

39. An agreement that emerged from the WSSD, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation sets commitments and priorities for action on sustainable development under 11 inter-related themes including globalization, health, natural resources and poverty.

40. In the 2009 session there was less room at the high-level segment than before, and opening speeches were reduced from three minutes to one. The Multistakeholder Dialogue took place before the Ministers had arrived.

41. See Centre national de coopération au développement (CNCD), 2007. *Les objectifs du millénaire et l'alimentation en Afrique : Étude diagnostique sur la RD Congo, le Burundi, le Rwanda, le Sénégal et le Burkina Faso* (The Millennium Development Goals and Alimentation in Africa: a diagnostic study on DR Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Senegal and Burkina Faso). CWBCI, Brussel. www.cncd.be/spip.php?article475, accessed on 25 September 2009. See also Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulics and Fishery of Burkina Faso (MAHRH). 2004. *Document de Stratégie de Développement Rural à l'horizon 2015* (Rural Development Strategy Paper for 2015). Ministère de l'Agriculture, Ouagadougou.

42. Fédération des Professionnels Agricoles du Faso (FEPAB), Fédération Nationale des Femmes Rurales du Burkina (FENAFERB), Fédération Nationale des Jeunes Professionnels Agricoles du Faso (FNJPAF), Fédération des Eleveurs du Burkina (FEB), Union Nationale des Producteurs de Coton du Burkina (UNPCB), Fédération Nationale des Producteurs de Bananes (FNPB), Union Nationale de Producteurs de Riz du Burkina (UNPRB), Fédération Nationale des Unions et Groupement de Gestion Forestière (FENUGGF), Union Nationale des Producteurs de Semences du Burkina (UNPSB).

43. The focus in 2008 was on rice as it is the staple food in the urban areas where the uprisings took place. In 2009, however, maize has been included in the support package.

44. On the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Burkina Faso and other topics.

45. Of which IFAP is the only PO.

46. ROPPA, PROPAC, EAFF, SACAU, UMAGRI.

47. This was implemented through Supreme Decree No. 28701 in May 2006.

48. In a recall referendum in August 2008, more than two-thirds of voters (67.4%) reaffirmed Morales' mandate.

49. The new Political Constitution was adopted by 61% of the popular vote in a national referendum in January 2009 and was enacted in February 2009.

50. The suggestions in the following paragraphs are addressed primarily to the UN system since there has been more opportunity for iterative discussion with them than with the people's movements.

51. Disadvantaged urban consumers and migrants are examples of other constituencies with which engagement needs to be intensified.

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United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), established in 1975, is a jointly-financed interagency programme of the UN system. NGLS promotes constructive relations between the United Nations and civil society, including through dynamic partnerships to foster greater coherence around cross-cutting and emerging issues on the UN's agenda and by facilitating meaningful civil society engagement in UN processes.

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- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)
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