

First International Decade of the World's Indigenous People in Asia, 1995-2004

Assessment Synthesis Report



About the Organisations

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is an independent regional knowledge, learning and enabling centre serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas – Afghanistan 🇦🇫, Bangladesh 🇬🇧, Bhutan 🇧🇹, China 🇨🇳, India 🇮🇳, Myanmar 🇲🇲, Nepal 🇳🇵, and Pakistan 🇵🇰 – and the global mountain community. Founded in 1983, ICIMOD is based in Kathmandu, Nepal, and brings together a partnership of regional member countries, partner institutions, and donors with a commitment for development action to secure a better future for the people and environment of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. ICIMOD's activities are supported by its core programme donors: the Governments of Austria, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and its regional member countries, along with programme co-financing donors. The primary objective of the Centre is to promote the development of an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem and to improve the living standards of mountain populations.

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Tebtebba, based in the Philippines, is an indigenous peoples' organization born out of the need for heightened advocacy to have the rights of indigenous peoples recognized, respected and protected worldwide. Established in 1996, Tebtebba seeks to promote a better understanding of the world's indigenous peoples, their worldviews, their issues and concerns. In this effort, it strives to bring indigenous peoples together to take the lead in policy advocacy and campaigns on all issues affecting them. Tebtebba has a special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Tebtebba, a word used by the indigenous Kankana-ey Igorots of the Northern Philippines, refers to a process of collectively discussing issues and presenting diverse views with the aim of reaching agreements, common positions, and concerted actions.

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International Centre for
Integrated Mountain Development
Kathmandu, Nepal



Indigenous Peoples'
International Centre for
Policy Research and Education
Baguio City, Philippines



International Fund for
Agricultural Development
Rome, Italy

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
Kathmandu, Nepal
November 2007

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Published by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
G.P.O. Box 3226
Kathmandu, Nepal

ISBN 978 92 9115 069 4 (Printed)
978 92 9115 070 0 (Electronic)

Editorial team

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Cover photo: composite from photos by N.K. Rai, A. Wilkes, D. Sherpa, S. Drong, N. Foerst, M. Kollmair, M. Eriksson

Printed and bound in Nepal by

Hill Side Press (P) Ltd.
Kathmandu

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This publication is available in electronic form at <http://books.icimod.org>

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Foreword

Director General, ICIMOD

Two-thirds of the world's estimated 300 million indigenous people live in Asia, often in remote areas, especially the hills and mountains. Indigenous peoples commonly retain a strong cultural, social, spiritual, and economic attachment to their land, but this connection is rarely recognised or valued by the existing systems of administration and governance. Irrespective of their legal status in the different countries, many indigenous peoples experience a lack of recognition of their cultural identity. They suffer exclusion and marginalisation. Indigenous people form a considerable proportion of the mountain poor, and thus need special attention in national and international development efforts in view of reaching sustainable development for all. With their extensive traditional knowledge and unique cultures, they contribute to maintaining mountain diversity and thus the ability to adapt to environmental change.

The present publication is the outcome of an assessment of the impact of the First International Decade of the World's Indigenous People in selected countries of South and Southeast Asia. It was carried out with support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and prepared in cooperation with the Tebtebba Foundation in the Philippines. The report presents a synthesis of the findings of individual assessments carried out in cooperation with partners in ten Asian countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam – and presents the recommendations to a wider audience. The assessment documents and analyses the extent to which the proclamations made at international level were translated into policy and programmatic changes at national and local level. The findings show that the main strength of the decade was at international level, where indigenous people's organisations and networks have been strengthened and institutionalised. The most recent success, the adoption of the 'UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' on 13 September 2007, is a visible outcome of these activities. The main challenge now is to improve the situation of indigenous peoples at national and local levels, where the successes of the First Decade are less visible. The recommendations given at the end of the synthesis provide some good indications for the way forward.

I am confident that this document will help to promote indigenous peoples' issues in Asia and beyond, and will contribute to the success of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. It will certainly help ICIMOD and our partners to sharpen the focus of our efforts to enable and facilitate the equitable and sustainable well-being of the people of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

Andreas Schild
Director General, ICIMOD

Foreword

IFAD

In Asia and the Pacific Region, indigenous people are among the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalised. Besides being income poor, people suffer from food insecurity, poor health and sanitation, and low levels of education. They are also disproportionately exposed to uninsured risks – health epidemics, droughts, and climate change, among others.

Even if the Asia and the Pacific Region achieves the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015, the bulk of remaining poverty will be concentrated among indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups living in less-favoured areas (uplands and mountains, marginal coastal areas, and drylands), with extremely difficult agro-ecological conditions. Socioeconomic and political marginalisation renders their traditional access to resources (land, forests) insecure. In addition, a number of recent studies have shown that not only do they have less access to assets but returns to the assets they have are also low.

IFAD's Strategic Framework (2007-2010) accords high priority to indigenous people's development because they are not only among the poorest, they are also custodians of the world's biodiversity and providers of environmental services. Enhancing the capabilities of indigenous peoples is a major strategic focus of IFAD in the region of Asia and the Pacific. IFAD-funded programmes in support of indigenous peoples focus on areas such as enhancing access to productive resources, enhancing livelihoods through sustainable natural resource management, and strengthening indigenous peoples' institutions. The evaluation of IFAD's regional strategy in 2006 recommended continuation of this focus and national stakeholders also strongly endorsed this priority in regional meetings in 2006.

We are happy to have collaborated with ICIMOD and the Tebtebba Foundation in undertaking this important study. The study highlights some important successes of the Decade including increased solidarity among indigenous peoples, and the development of some enabling laws and constitutional provisions to enhance their access to resources. However, it also brings out failures which include the lack of awareness about the Decade among policy makers, development practitioners and the public in general; serious implementation gaps in national laws and international conventions; and the lack of recognition of indigenous rights.

The Assessment Synthesis Report and the 10 country reports provide a wealth of information, insights, and lessons, which can help all of us in achieving greater success in the implementation of the Second Decade. It will definitely help IFAD in better designing its country strategies, projects, and programmes in support of indigenous people. It will also provide inputs for policy dialogue with governments and other stakeholders.

Ganesh Thapa
Regional Economist
Asia and Pacific Division
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Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to carrying out the assessment, preparing the country papers for the ten countries in South and Southeast Asia, and extracting the details for this synthesis report. On behalf of ICIMOD, I would like to thank them all. Some I would like to mention in particular.

First, our special thanks go to the Tebtebba Foundation in the Philippines, and in particular Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Leah Abayao, for their uncomplicated collaboration and partnership in conducting the assessment. Tebtebba, an Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education, is widely renowned for its work on and with indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia.

Second, we are grateful to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) whose financial support made the assessment possible. Ganesh Thapa, the Regional Economist, Asia and Pacific Division, contributed substantially to the success of the assessment and to the empowerment of indigenous peoples with his vision, ideas and encouragement.

My sincere thanks go to my colleague Radhika Gupta who coordinated the entire project on behalf of ICIMOD. She developed the framework for the country assessments, attended most of the consultations across South Asia, coordinated the submission of results, and started drafting this synthesis report before leaving ICIMOD for further studies in January 2007.

We especially thank all the colleagues who contributed directly or indirectly to compiling the report, first and foremost the country report writers who organised the data collection and consultations, including Abe Almirol, Bernabe Almirol, Clint Bangaan, Aida Priscilla Cadiogan, Mangal Kumar Chakma, Sanjeeb Drong, Leah Enkiwe, Walter Fernandes, Om Gurung, Joseph Marianus Kujjur, Ritu Dewan, Dawa Lhamo, Seng Narong, Luong Thu Oanh, Moul Phath, Françoise Pommaret, Albertus Hadi Pramono. Raja Devasish Roy, Sakda Saenmi, Sanjaya Serchan, Rukka Sombolinggi, Bernardinus Steni, and Andreas Wilkes.

We also recognise and appreciate the contribution of the participants of the culmination workshop in Kathmandu in November 2006, whose abundant knowledge on indigenous peoples' issues contributed substantially to the synthesis of the results of the country studies, particularly Navin K. Rai, Lead Social Development Specialist and Indigenous Peoples Coordinator for the World Bank, Ganesh Thapa from IFAD, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and Gabriel Campbell, then Director General of ICIMOD.

Finally, special thanks for additional inputs to the synthesis report goes to our ICIMOD colleagues Dhruvad Choudhury, Joy Dasgupta, Eva Gerharz, Tawheed Gul, Narpal S. Jodha, Elisabeth Kerkhoff, Krishna P Oli, Numa Rai, and Xitij Rai as well as to the editorial and production team Beatrice Murray, Susan Sellars-Shrestha, Dharma Ratna Maharjan, and Asha Kaji Thaku.

ICIMOD and its Culture, Equity, Gender and Governance (CEGG) programme is very fortunate to have had the opportunity to carry out this assignment and is committed to taking part in further work related to indigenous peoples.

Michael Kollmair
Programme Manager CEGG
ICIMOD

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AITPN	Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CHARM	Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Programme
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy
CSDM	Centre for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FPIC	free, prior, and informed consent
ICCPR	The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	The International Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMPECT	Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association
INDISCO	Interregional Programme to Support Self Reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples through Cooperatives and Self-Help Organizations
IP	indigenous peoples
IPRA	Indigenous Peoples Rights Act
NCIP	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (Philippines)
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NFDIN	National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities
NFE	non-formal education
NGO	non-government organisation
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PESA	Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
Tebtebba	Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education
TSP	Tribal Sub-Plan
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WGIP	Working Group on Indigenous Populations
WTO	World Trade Organization

Currency Equivalent

\$1 = IRs 45.00 (aprox.) in 2004