

Annex: IFAD Programmes and Projects Related to Indigenous Peoples

Overview

Since its inception, IFAD has been heavily involved in the development of indigenous peoples due to its targeted approach to rural development. In support of indigenous peoples, it has provided the equivalent of USD 1,134 million in loans (about 12.6% of its total loan portfolio) since 1977 (IFAD 2006). Many of these loans have been directed to countries in Latin America and Asia. IFAD funded projects have addressed an assortment of issues of great importance to indigenous peoples like indigenous knowledge systems and modern technology; indigenous institutions and judicial systems; access to ancestral lands and territories; the capacity-building of indigenous women; sustainable natural resources management; bilingual education and inter-cultural awareness; indigenous identity and self esteem; and culturally based micro-enterprise development.

An example of IFAD's support for indigenous knowledge systems can be seen in its project with Subanen communities in the Western Mindanao region of the Philippines. In this project, traditional ecological knowledge was documented and disseminated in local-based school curricula and the safeguarding of intellectual property rights was supported. IFAD's support for sustainable natural resources management can also be witnessed in the Jharkhand-Chhattisgarh Tribal Development Programme in India, where implementation of the provisions of the Panchayat Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act of 1996 is being assisted. Village assemblies or gram sabhas have been set up and the ownership and management of all natural resources, along with execution of financial and food-aid programme resources, have been delegated to committees of women, men, and poorer household members.

IFAD's strategy in Asia and the Pacific with its specific focus on indigenous peoples was evaluated by the IFAD Office of Evaluation, which concluded that the strategic focus was very appropriate and relevant. The Office also noted that, due to IFAD's many accomplishments in Asia and the Pacific, it must maintain its important role in addressing rural poverty with a specific reference to indigenous peoples. Moreover, a separate evaluation carried out by the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Development Project in India underlined the fact that there was a direct correlation between the IFAD funded project and the decline of insurgency activities in the project vicinity.

However, that said, according to the Assessment report for North-eastern India written by Walter Fernandes, indigenous action was limited to the leaders who attended UN meetings. IFAD was unable to reach indigenous peoples in rural areas who wanted the support of IFAD to develop their own indigenous identities based on the revival of the local economy, natural resources, and their communities.

The following provides an overview of the IFAD projects and programmes related to indigenous peoples in six of the ten countries assessed including the project/programme name, location, status-quo, and IFAD's objectives (as of March 2007).

China

There are three ongoing IFAD projects/programmes in China related to indigenous peoples: the South Gansu Poverty-Reduction Programme, the Environment Conservation and Poverty Reduction Programme in Ningxia and Shanxi, and the Wulin Mountains Minority Areas Development Project. These projects/programmes have been selected due to the high level of poverty in the areas that they cover. For example, 80% of the twelve counties in the Ningxia and Shanxi programme are poor and 10% are extremely poor. Harsh living conditions due to extreme climates, regular droughts, lack of water, seasonal food deficits, low-yielding arable land, and inadequate access to potable water have made life ever more challenging. Inadequate healthcare and education, along with insufficient funds to improve technology, have also hampered progress.

IFAD aims to increase food security, income, and production on and off the farm. It also wants to achieve improved access to financial services, education, health, potable water, and social networks such as grass-roots organisations, along with support for rural infrastructure, protection of common resources, promotion of community participation, and micro-enterprises, support of literacy and training programmes, reduction of chronic poverty, and, finally, formation of small village groups to spread information and mobilise communities.

India

In India, IFAD has four ongoing projects/programmes related to indigenous people (Livelihoods Improvement Project in the Himalayas, Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme, Jharkhand-Chhattisgarh Tribal Development Programme, and North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project for Upland Areas), four other projects/programmes which have ended (Livelihood Security Project for Earthquake-Affected Rural Households in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh Participatory Tribal Development Project, Andhra Pradesh Tribal Development Project, and Orissa Tribal Development Project), and one programme that is not yet implemented (Tejaswini Rural Women's Empowerment Programme). These projects/programmes have been chosen to address the issues of vulnerable groups, disadvantaged women, marginal households, landless people, poor hill cultivators and farmers, earthquake affected people, and marginalised tribal peoples. The standard of living of some of these groups is further aggravated by the rugged highlands, remote and underdeveloped districts, and deprived regions, overlaid by environmental degradation.

A plethora of development driven initiatives have been undertaken by IFAD as part of these projects/programmes including women's development through support for women's self-help groups and apex organisations. Targeting for such programmes needs to be flexible and responsive to local conditions and should attempt to strengthen women's participation in governance.

Indonesia

The Rural Empowerment for Agricultural Development Programme in Central Sulawesi is the only IFAD project/programme in Indonesia related to indigenous peoples, but is not yet being implemented. The programme has been selected to attend to the widespread poverty in the highlands and coastal regions of the Central Sulawesi Province, the fifth poorest province in Indonesia. The struggle for natural resources has marginalised indigenous groups and caused irreparable environmental damage.

IFAD hopes to provide livelihoods for the most disadvantaged communities by raising incomes, introducing sustainable agricultural technologies and practices, and providing a revolving fund through which poor farmers can carry out a series of activities to generate income and produce assets. The programme also hopes to help communities plan their own activities and manage their own development, improve agricultural production, develop rural enterprises and access to markets, and build infrastructure such as irrigation facilities, water supplies, and roads.

Nepal

IFAD has two on-going projects/programmes in Nepal (Leasehold Forestry and Livestock Programme and Western Uplands Poverty Alleviation Project) and one closed project (Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project) related to indigenous peoples. These three projects/programmes were chosen due to the large percentage of poor people in the areas that they cover who suffer from widespread poverty and environmental degradation. There are groups of poor families in 22 districts in the mid hills area of Nepal. The project areas are characterised by harsh terrain and climate, isolation, poor infrastructure, and degraded forestland. In addition, these areas were also affected by the insurgency. The projects/programmes started in the least affected insurgency areas before moving on to areas that were more insurgency-affected. In the areas worst affected by the insurgency, people were unable to secure enough food year round and struggled to grow enough crops to feed themselves.

In the now closed project, IFAD managed to restore degraded environments by leasing small sections of forestland to poor families as leasehold forestry groups on a renewable 40-year lease basis. Under these leases, the families managed the land for their own use and were able to regenerate the forestland and ensure greater food security, improved nutrition, and increased biodiversity.

In the two ongoing projects, IFAD aims to reduce poverty using a similar strategy of allocating leasehold forestry plots to poor families to allow them to increase incomes using forest products and livestock and improve household forage and tree crop production. The approaches used include improvement and strengthening of livelihoods through access to micro-finance, improved access to services and resources, promotion of different livelihood options (livestock, forestry, crops), creation of village finance associations, and the empowerment of women and marginalised groups.

Philippines

In the Philippines, IFAD has one closed project (Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project) and two ongoing projects (Northern Mindanao Community Initiatives and Resource Management Project and Western Mindanao Community Initiatives Project). These projects have been implemented to address the high incidence of poverty among vulnerable fisher families, landless workers, upland people, labourers, women, and former combatants belonging either to indigenous groups or Muslim communities. These groups experience high rates of illiteracy, underemployment and unemployment, limited assets, landlessness, dependence on tenant farming or agricultural work, and introverted modes of living. Moreover, the location of these upland villages in remote, rugged, and largely mountainous regions without basic services and limited access to important natural resources such as forests and pastures make it increasingly challenging for the rural poor. The poverty rate of these groups is significantly higher than the national average in these areas, which also lack social infrastructure, government support services, and access to credit, especially for women who suffer low levels of social and economic development.

In the Cordillera Highland Project, IFAD helped increase production, created employment opportunities, reduced income and development gaps, addressed environmental concerns, made better use of existing staff resources, and strengthened local government units. Poverty reduction was carried out by increasing the disposable incomes of smallholder families through sustainable resource management, protection of the environment, mitigation of the adverse effects of development, strengthening of existing institutions, improving access to formal and informal credit, and involving poor people in planning and implementation.

In the two ongoing projects, poor communities are being enabled to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate activities chosen by them in order to achieve increased subsistence production, cash crops, and fisheries so as to become self-reliant. In order to improve livelihoods, IFAD is working to improve the management of land and water resources, in fisheries development, off-farm activities, and small enterprise development. Former combatants and indigenous peoples are being given special attention through the consolidation of land ownership, the decentralisation of authority from the national level to the local level, building knowledge bases, bolstering the capacities of NGOs and peoples' organisations, supporting advocacy campaigns, legal assistance, orientation programmes, and the establishment of ancestral domains and their mapping to facilitate sustainable development and formulate protection plans.

Vietnam

There are a total of three IFAD projects/programmes related to indigenous peoples in Vietnam, two ongoing (Decentralized Programme for Rural Poverty Reduction in Ha Giang and Quang Binh Provinces and Rural Income Diversification Project in Tuyen Quang Province) and one closed (Ha Giang Development Project for Ethnic Minorities). These projects/programmes were chosen to tackle poverty in the poorest communities, for example, poor people in 900 villages in the project in Tuyen Quang Province. These areas are not only poor but are also distant and remote. They have a unique geography and climate, and unique upland vulnerability issues. In the closed project, the area involved also had to deal with annual food shortages lasting three to seven months.

With these projects/programmes, IFAD aims to improve productivity, income levels, and the food security of ethnic minorities, vulnerable communities, and women by providing training in agriculture and animal husbandry, marketing, and food storage and processing. IFAD also works to improve infrastructure, health services, and credit, along with strengthening village-level institutions such as user groups and village development boards. Enhancing a community's ability to manage commune-level institutions, promoting the government's ongoing decentralisation process, establishing management and service delivery structures, and developing environmentally sustainable and culturally viable models are also ways by which livelihoods can be improved in the project areas.