# Improving indigenous peoples' access to justice and development through community-based monitoring – Final Independent evaluation

## QUICK FACTS

**Countries: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Suriname, Tanzania**

**Evaluation date: 19 October 2022**

**Evaluation type:  Project**

**Evaluation timing:  Final**

**Administrative Office: GEDI**

**Technical Office: GEDI**

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*Key Words:   [Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery](#)*

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

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| **Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure** | The project was built upon the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights-funded initiative, in the context of which a community-based monitoring framework on indigenous peoples' rights was developed and piloted. Within the project, pillars 1 and 2 were developed to consolidate the Indigenous Navigator framework and related tools, and to scale-up capacity building for indigenous peoples' communities and networks to use the framework for community-based monitoring. The pillars form part of the Global Indigenous Navigator Initiative (GINI), a broader European Union programme that also included a third pillar (pillar 3) on access of indigenous peoples to social services and protection through engagement with local authorities. Pillar 3 was led by the International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). <br><br> GINI is a partnership bringing together the European Union, ILO, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), and Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education). <br><br> GINI seeks to ensure that indigenous peoples' rights, needs and priorities are taken into account in national action to implement international standards and commitments such as the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, which recognizes the role of indigenous peoples in combatting climate change. <br><br> The projects' governance arrangements are complex and multi-layered. The ILO manages Pillars 1 and 2, with a Steering Committee in place for strategic guidance and decision-making. Regional coordination partners backstop country implementation partners. <br><br> The GINI has global and national components. National components target Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Suriname, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Philippines, Cameroon, Kenya, and Tanzania. |
| **Present situation of the project** | The project operations and activities were fully completed by February 2022. |

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| **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation** | The purpose of the evaluation is to provide expert support to the ILO and their partners in analyzing: 1) The extent to which the projects achieved their aims and objectives; 2) The relevance and coherence, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of project outcomes; and 3) Identify key lessons learned and best practices through project implementation. The evaluation's intended audience encompasses all organizations involved in the project, including the ILO, the donor (EU), regional coordination partners (AIPP, FPP, IWGIA and Tebtebba), national level implementing partners (see table 1), the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) and the Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IPMG).  The findings and lessons learned from this evaluation should also benefit other ILO units engaged in indigenous rights and empowerment issues, and local, national and regional indigenous peoples' organizations (IPOs) and networks and may also be relevant for national, international and development actors. |
| **Methodology of evaluation** | The evaluation covered project implementation and outcomes in all 11 of the countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.  However, considering that COVID-19 travel restrictions still made travel to most target countries impractical, it was only feasible to conduct field site visits and FDGs in Cambodia, where the evaluation team leader resides. Plans to conduct field work in Colombia, was deemed too risky due to the unstable situation relating to elections. The main steps in the evaluation process included: |
| | **Comprehensive desktop study:** The desktop review covered key project documents, as well as a wide range of project related documents. It was conducted initially as a rapid exercise to inform the development of the research tools. Documents were revisited in parallel with the primary data collection process. This meant that the reviews informed the interview process, and provided for cross-verification of FGD/interview responses. |
| | **Development of research tools:** The ILO provided a preliminary list of evaluation questions to help guide the evaluation.  During the inception phase the questions were refined, clustered and developed into a EQM. The EQM was converted into a simpler set of open questions to elicit qualitative data from respondents. |

**Online interviews and FGDs:** Online interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a total of 50 people representing all 20 IN consortium partners and representatives of several IPOs.

**Field Visits and direct consultations:** Field visits were conducted to 5 different indigenous communities Cambodia and focus-group discussions were conducted with mixed groups of men and women.

**Stakeholder workshop:** The findings of the evaluation were presented to selected stakeholders from the ILO and project partners during an online workshop and feedback was incorporated into the final report.

**MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS**

The project was highly relevant, coherent and strategic in response to the ongoing conditions of marginalization facing many indigenous peoples. It was effective, as significant impacts were achieved in all countries; and efficient, as a lot was achieved with a very small budget. Budget limitations were overcome by harnessing the passion, commitment, knowledge and networks of the partners. An adaptive-collaborative management approach was crucial, with each of the partners allowed considerable scope to plan and implement locality specific strategies and workplans. The regional, national and local level partnerships are strong and the partners are preparing for a follow-up project with expanded scope. However, the approach is not yet sustainable with local partners lacking the skills and resources to implement the approach independently. The project has garnered considerable interest amongst other development agencies, and was considered highly innovative with strong prospects for positive impact. Looking forward, the partners face the challenge of scaling-up in a manner that maintains fidelity to core principles and maximizes potential for widespread adoption and ongoing use.

**Gender equality, diversity, inclusion and non-discrimination:** Partners need to consider approaches responding to community expectation of social inclusion, like allocating sufficient resources to enable the participation of entire, extended IP communities.

The approach, survey tools, training and guidance materials need a much strong focus on gender and IPs with disabilities.

They should also remain mindful of non-IP ethnic minorities, who face many of the same development challenges as IPs.

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**Environmental Sustainability:** The project lacked an explicit environmental focus, but environmental issues often rose to the fore. Land rights and resource rights were identified as keystone right.

There is an urgent need for more and better documented community-based natural resource management (CB-NRM) projects to demonstrate the ability of IPs to sustainably manage their lands and natural ecosystems.

Two important opportunities which should be integrated into the IN framework are the Convention on Biological Diversity - Aichi Target 18, and the Paris Agreements and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).

**Responsiveness to stakeholder needs:** A "top-down, bottom-up, meeting-in-the-middle" enabled IPs to shape project local level implementation whilst linking with international institutions and frameworks. However, there remains a fundamental mismatch between 'global' and IPs' paradigms and there's a need for tools to calibrate the Navigator locally.

**Ownership:** There's a strong sense of ownership of the IN in all countries, though it was weaker in Latin America and Philippines. This implies the IN is more useful to IPs fighting for basic rights and recognition, than in contexts with a more mature IPs movement. Further effort is needed to adapt and integrate the framework, tools and approach to local needs.

**Ownership of the Web Portal:** The sense of ownership of the web portal was relatively weak. Consideration needs to be given to the best institutional arrangements for hosting a global IN portal or many national level portals.

**Ownership of IN Data:** Some issues relating to ownership and use of community-data, especially once it has been uploaded to the web, remain unresolved. Closer attention needs to be paid to analyzing, addressing and documenting such issues.

**Alignment with National Sustainable Development Planning Frameworks (NSDPFs):** The NSDPFs in most countries are weak in relation to IPs. The partners need to keep advocating for greater inclusion of IPs needs and aspirations.

**Alignment with the ILO/UN Normative Frameworks:** The IN was rooted in the UN Normative Frameworks and was an innovative and strategic effort to implement key elements of the UN System-wide

action plan on UNDRIP. Further support is needed for national/international networking and advocacy and to build linkages with the CBD and the Paris Agreement.

**IN and the SDGs:** The IN is an excellent example of localization of the SDGs. It helped IPs/IPOs and government agencies to develop a deeper understanding about the SDGs and identify key implementation gaps and helped IPOs engage with development actors using the language (data) that helps them be heard better where it counts.

Nevertheless, there is a crucial gap in understanding between indigenous and non-indigenous worldviews and ideas of sustainability, and the IN partners need to foster further innovation to help bridge this gap in understanding.

**Relevance to ILO and Donor Needs and Priorities:** The project was highly relevant to the ILO's and EU's mandate and previous work. However, IPs lack direct representation within the ILO and further mainstreaming is needed within the ILO.

**Theory of Change (ToC):** The ToC and approach were logical, but was undermined by several flawed assumptions, particularly relating to the capacity of IPs. Consequently, the goals were ambitious and some of them could not be achieved.

Training and capacity building needs were underestimated, especially in terms of IPs knowledge of international frameworks, computer skills, and the capacity of IP leaders to conduct effective advocacy.

The Adaptive-Collaborative Management approach allowed for flexibility and responsiveness in implementation, as the ToC, workplans, etc. were not seen as a fixed set of targets but guidance to be modified as circumstances change.

**External linkages:** International network building efforts were strong, especially through ILO and IPMG. However, linkages with international agencies are yet to be optimized and ongoing support is needed from the ILO, IPMG, DIHR, EU, etc.

**Achievement of results:** The project was effective in relation to the objectives, expected results, products and activities. The COVID Pandemic severely impacted implementation of the work plan, but the ACM approach allowed partners to respond rapidly. The MEL system gathered relevant data and guided adaptation of the approach.

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Partners were able to influence policy relating to IPs, including adoption of elements of the IN or the use of IN-data in government planning.

**Factors Affecting Success:** The key *strengths* include the Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) approach, collaborative leadership and culture, the passion and commitment of the partners and the focus on networking, alliance building, innovation, adaptation, capacity building and knowledge generation and sharing as key strengths, together with the fact that it was evidence-based and anchored to UNDRIP, C.169 and the SDGs.

Key *weaknesses* mostly related to under budgeting and under resourcing of key aspects and weak ownership of the web portal and tools. Looking forward greater emphasis needs to be placed on gender, equality & indigenous peoples living with disabilities as well as environmental sustainability.

IN partners should conduct SWOT analyses on a regular basis as part of their internal processes of reflection and self-evaluation and to inform and guide project planning.

**Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing**: The IN was effective in terms of raising awareness among IPs about their rights and the SDGs, and building their capacity to collect data, plan and implement projects and advocate for their rights.

Training and capacity building needs were underestimated and underbudgeted, and the IN relied heavily on partner initiative to fill the gap. Reliance on local partner initiative is not considered sustainable in the long term.

IN partners face the challenge of expanding and adapting the approach whilst scaling-up to cover more countries and communities, whilst simultaneously attempting to maintain the flexibility and autonomy of local partners. Much more resources need to be allocated to support training, capacity building and knowledge sharing aspects, and the partners need to explore different tools, methods and strategic partnerships which can assist with scaling-up, training, capacity-building and knowledge sharing aspects without compromising on core principles or other key aspects of the approach.

**Management of Contingencies and Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic:** The ACM approach enabled the partners to respond rapidly and effectively to the pandemic. Specifically, the network of

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largely autonomous national and local partners allowed it to rapidly analyze and respond to changed circumstances. Activities and resources were effectively used to assist indigenous people receive information about the pandemic in their languages, in a timely manner, and to enable the project activities to continue at the local level despite travel restrictions.

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning:** The project did not allocate sufficient resources for country level MEL and partners filled the gap with their own resources. This is not sustainable and more resources need to be allocated to MEL functions.

Monitoring visits by regional partners were considered very useful in terms of providing technical, administrative and strategic support, but field monitoring visits were too short and infrequent and became impossible after the pandemic.

A key gap in the MEL system was the paucity of documentation relating to the implementation of the IN project at the national and local levels, which functioned like local field laboratories for adaptation and innovation in tools and methods.

Systematic documentation of these processes (including audio-visual) would help with self-evaluation, capturing lessons learned and best practices and conveying information about the IN in action.

Looking forward, the MEL system should be revised and streamlined as far as possible, including deeper analysis of the extent to which it supported strategic adaptation rather than simply tactical adaptation.

**Management and Governance:** The project was an outstanding example of Adaptive-Collaborative Management (ACM), which was crucial in adapting the IN approach to each country and locality, and the projects rapid pivot in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The ILO and the regional shared responsibility for coordinating, administering, mentoring and backstopping the national partners effectively and efficiently, whereas the national partners also supported local partners to manage and report on their budget allocations. The ACM approach, and the collaborative leadership and culture of the IN consortium in particular, were amongst the key factors leading to success.

**Efficiency:** The IN project was managed flexibly and efficiently, achieving strong results with a small budget spread thinly across 11 countries and hundreds of communities. Project management

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challenges included the coordinating a highly complex project implemented by diverse partners, with their own workplans, small budget and highly ambitious targets.

Project administration was managed well by the ILO and IWGIA through the regional partners, who disbursed funds to the national partners based up formal funding requests. The activities were precise, and resources were limited, but the partners had freedom to adapt and adjust their spending, which was highly appreciated and considered practice.

The project was underbudgeted especially for training and capacity building, MEL, advocacy and other activities at the national level and additional resources should be allocated.

**Allocation of Resources:** The budget for the IN project was very small, especially Pillar 1, which included most of the community-level activities. Significant 'un-planned' in-kind support had to be found from all of the partners.

Whilst the budget was small, the partners found ways to share this modest pool of funding across 11 countries and around 200 participating communities. Each of the national partners was allocated a portion of the funds and were given considerable scope regarding how they were used to implement activities at the local and national levels.

Insufficient resources were allocated to training, capacity building, MEL, and advocacy. Looking forward, the partners need to ensure more resources are available for grass roots training, capacity building, MEL, knowledge sharing and advocacy.

**Disbursements and Budgetary Management:** The complex financial management system and unfamiliarity of the national partners with the EU's systems and requirements, and the multi-partner management arrangements, led to delays in submitting and approving financial request, disbursement of funds and reporting during the early phase of implementation. However, as the partners gained experience with the systems, it became easier for the partners to manage and report on their budgets and the flow of disbursements and financial reports became much smoother.

**Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** The hybrid approach to multi-partner collaboration and coordination and decentralized multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement were crucial to project success

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across multiple countries and represents an important contribution to the realization of SDG 17 – "Global Partnership for Sustainable Development."

**Funds Leveraged & In-Kind Contributions:** The IN Consortium was unable to leverage any additional funding to support project implementation. On the other hand, in-kind contributions from the national and local partners were significant and a testament to how valuable the partners and IP communities felt the project was to them.

Further support is required to broaden the Consortiums network of potential donor and access to ongoing funding.

**Risk Management:** Various project-related risks were identified, managed and monitored. A set of social and environmental safeguards were developed, particularly relating to the small projects under pillar 3, and measures were put in place to protect data security. However, there is no publicly available information relating to the IN consortiums approach to risk management, and it is not externally transparent how systematic or holistic the approach was or how well it was implemented by international, regional, national and local partners.

**Progress Towards Impact**

The Indigenous Navigator has had a significant impact in terms of empowering IPs and improving their knowledge and capacity to advocate for their rights. The capacity, networks and alliances of partners at all levels were enhanced, and a set of tools was developed to support their work. Over 100 IN training workshops were held, with people from over 200 IP communities trained regarding rights, SDGs and community-data collection. Based on that, community data collections and advocacy campaigns were implemented as well as 49 community projects (under Pillar 3).

**Implementing Recommendations of the MTE:** The IN consortium did a good job of implementing the key recommendations from the MTE, including: Improving the quality and strategic focus of the pilot projects, production of knowledge products based on community-generated data, redesign of the web portal, linking data collection and tangible outcomes (though Pillar 3 grants) and reallocating resources to allow partners greater flexibility.

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**Long-term impacts on equality and inclusion:** The IN project generated many pertinent changes in the participating countries and communities, such as increased awareness about IPs rights, enhanced capacity to plan, monitor and advocate for their rights, including the right to full participation in sustainable development processes and actions to address the triple planetary crisis. In some cases, it led to increased government openness to address IPs concerns and develop more inclusive policies and programs. However, these changes are not yet reflected in a clear and long-term change in the situation experienced by most IPs in these countries, and most of the changes are contingent upon the prevailing domestic political climate, which can change suddenly.

**Sustainable Partnerships:** The project had a strong focus on networking and alliance building, and selected national partners with strong existing grassroots networks. The project effectively built upon, strengthened and expanded the collaborative capacity of these networks. As such the probability that the partners will continue to collaborate on issues relating to IPs-rights and empowerment is assessed as being very high.

There are still a number of crucial capacity gaps within the consortium and broader partnership, including technical capacity gaps relating to feeding the web-portal, engagement with national and international stakeholders, UN agencies, donors and the private sector. Further support from the ILO or other UN agencies is needed.

**Sustainability of Project Outcomes:** Most partners and stakeholders interviewed feel that the IN Framework, tools and approach are extremely useful and they plan to continue using them but some national partners and most local partners feel that they need further capacity building support and funding to continue developing the IN.

In terms of sustainability, the IN Web Portal remains the weakest link, as it will require long-term funding to host, maintain and manage, and it unclear who should take responsibility for the web portal in the long term.

Furthermore, to be truly effective it needs to be easily accessible to IP stakeholders and a web portal should ideally be established in each target country. However, this has large cost implications and institutional arrangements for national level hosting need to be

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carefully considered as there's a risk community processes may be undermined.

**Exit Strategy:** The main challenges over the next few years will be how to scale-up the scope and impact of the IN approach to a meaningful level, whilst building sufficient local capacity and ownership, and maintaining fidelity to the core principles and enabling factors that have underpinned the IN approach. This will require the development of strategies for scaling-up and ensuring sustainability at all levels, as early as possible in the next phase of the project.

All of the partners feel that the ILO's decision to step back from the consortium leaves crucial capacity gaps in terms of expertise, resources, networks, branding and leadership, and they hope that the ILO will continue to support the IN Consortium, ideally by developing a parallel program to further support and promote the Navigator.

## RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

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| **Main findings & Conclusions** | **1. Environmental Sustainability:** The Indigenous Navigator must urgently strengthen its focus on the rights, roles and responsibilities of IPs in action on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution issues. In particular, there is an urgent need for more and better documented community-based natural resource management (CB-NRM) projects that can demonstrate the ability of IPs to effectively and sustainably manage their customary lands and protect the biodiversity, ecosystem carbon and other environmental goods and services. |
| | **2. Responsiveness to stakeholder needs:** In order to enhance responsiveness to stakeholder needs and the sense of local ownership, a number of actions should be taken by the IN consortium partners, including: more frequent field monitoring visits, longer in duration in order to give the consortium partners a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of the national and local partners and stakeholders; developing a "sustainability compass" or similar tools, to help each IP community to better identify and communicate what sustainable development means to them and to help develop and integrate indigenous indicators for wellness aspects; integration of the IN approach with existing community |

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empowerment and sustainable development planning methodologies.

**3. Ownership of the IN Framework and Approach, of the Web Portal, and of the IN Data.**

**4. Mainstreaming IP Issues and Increasing IP Participation in the Governance of the ILO:** Further mainstreaming of IP issues is required within the ILO to breakdown silos and ensure that all branches and country offices are fully informed about, attuned to and allocate their in-country financial and human resources appropriately to address IPs rights and sustainable development issues. In particular the ILO's GEDI Branch should seek funding to ensure that ILO country offices have sufficient resources to provide technical and networking support to IN consortium partners in each of the IN target countries.

**5. The role of the EU:** The EU should commit to funding the development of the IN approach for a third and fourth 5-year phase, because the IN approach has great potential but requires further experimentation and gradual scaling-up in order to achieve this potential. This will require up to ten years to implement at scale, and a long term funding commitment will allow the IN consortium partners to plan their approach to scaling-up strategically.

**6. External linkages / Role of international partners:** For the next stage of the IN, there needs to be a clearer role for the ILO (or other UN agencies) and the donor to play a stronger role in supporting national and international level advocacy and networking and financing.

**7. Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing**: The IN's focus on capacity building and knowledge sharing was one of its main strengths. However, there were insufficient opportunities for the regional, national and local partners to meet in person, share experiences and exchange knowledge throughout the course of the project.

**8. Risk Management:** An environmental and social safeguard framework (ESSF) was developed, particularly relating to small projects funded under Pillar 3, and measures were put in place to

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| | protect data security, but it was not clear how adequate these are or how consistently they were applied. |
| | **9. Exit Strategy:** The ILO should continue promoting the Navigator, supporting their national and international level networking activities and encouraging the ILO country offices, UN Resident Coordinator and other UN agencies to support the IN consortium's advocacy efforts, strengthen consultative mechanisms and promote dialogue about IPs needs and concerns. Ideally, the ILO should either directly develop, or through its role in the IASG encourage other UN agencies to develop, parallel activities which will support the efforts of the IN consortium to scale-up and become self-sustaining over the coming decade. |
| | **10. Scaling-up for Systemic Impact / Giving the Navigator LEGS and WINGS:** The consortium partners need to invest as early as possible in the development of LEGS, or Local Empowerment, Growth and Sustainability Strategy for each locality, as well as WINGS (Worldwide Indigenous Navigator Growth and Sustainability Strategy) to help guide the scaling-up in a measured, consistent and sustainable manner. Functional scaling-up or integrating the IN approach or elements thereof into other programmes is arguably the most important strategy for scaling-up. |
| **Main lessons learned and good practices** | **Lessons Learned**<br>A *Multi-Stakeholder Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM)* can be an effective 'engine' for innovation, adaptation, peer-to-peer learning, and indigenous peoples' empowerment<br>The ILO and other UN Agencies, can use their networks and authority to support effective advocacy for indigenous peoples' rights and empowerment by local and national organizations.<br>UNDRIP, C.169, WCIP-OD, and the SDGs can be effective frameworks to support the empowerment of indigenous peoples and the realization of their rights both in law and in practice, as long as key enabling factors are in place.<br>If IPs are given the right support, they are quite capable of conducting participatory or action research and monitoring across a range of social, economic, ecological and other issues.<br>The IN project showed that IPOs and communities can act as effective advocates for their rights, although it depends upon the skills, self- |

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confidence, commitment and time of their leaders, support from national or international partners to gain access to national level policy makers, and most of all, identifying and capturing the appropriate opportunities to engage with local and/or national level policy makers.

The success of the IN project was in large part due to the consortium partners, who contributed to the consortium in terms of their own networks of local partners and allies, as well as their knowledge and expertise regarding IP issues and empowerment in each country and their passion and commitment.

**Best Practices**

The ***Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM)*** approach was highly effective in terms of managing the partnership.

The ***multi-stakeholder approach*** was an outstanding example of how multi-partner/multi-stakeholder approaches can effect meaningful change at the local, national and even international levels.

***Community-based participatory research*** – The IN project demonstrated that IPs are capable of collecting data and carrying out research and monitoring as part of sustainable development and environmental management efforts.

The ***dialectic*** *or* 'Top-down, bottom-up, meeting-in-the-middle' approach can bridge gaps between international and national frameworks relating to IPs rights and participation in sustainable development and the actual reality of IPs.

***Localization of the SDGs:*** The IN project was an innovative and effective approach to localize the SDGs, and the only systematic effort to date which aims to localize the SDGs in indigenous communities.

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