



2ND WORLD CONFERENCE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Together for wellbeing and Mother Earth





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Participatory mechanisms related to Indigenous Peoples can be¹:

Consultations - usually broad presentations of processes that influence the groups involved, whether Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous women.

Free prior informed consent (FPI consent) - different from consultations, it allows Indigenous Peoples to know the subject for approval, they discuss it beforehand, and they are part of the process. Groups involved make sure that their proposals are included in the final documents of the process, although this does not necessarily mean that all proposals will be incorporated.

Co-management refers to processes where people are in charge of the management to reach a goal, and do it together with other actors, private entities or government agencies.

Self-management refers to efforts of the groups themselves to manage processes.



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Women's leadership and their necessary contributions in decision-making processes are recognized in many Indigenous communities, whether it is territory, health, economy or spirituality. Indigenous women play a **role that is paramount** in the preservation of **sovereignty over their land and natural resources**. Interaction and reciprocity with nature contribute to the sustainability of natural resources and the protection of biodiversity, as well as to the **maintenance of ancestral knowledge** regarding nature and **socio-political organization** of their communities. Their traditional knowledge and practices regarding children's and women's health should also favor their inclusion in political and decision-making processes on such issues.

However, **racism and structural patriarchy** obstruct the participation of Indigenous Women in various official political spheres, and sometimes also within their communities. Limitation to access land ownership, acquire relevant positions or lead political parties, for example, is closely linked to the colonial heritage and gender-related discrimination and is reflected in the **low rates of Indigenous Women that are mayors, ministers or judges**. In fact, it is worth mentioning cases of concealment of Indigenous Women by official and international entities. There are media tactics that allegedly recognize the rights and promote the empowerment of women, but the truth is that Indigenous Women themselves are not included or consulted along these processes, and the effects are likely to be the opposite of what was intended, or nil at best.

However, in recent years there has been a **growing number of Indigenous Women's organizations and networks raising their voices both locally and globally**, meaning that they get organized to defend their rights and their communities' rights at all levels.

In the global arena, Indigenous Women have led a significant number of recommendations to protect individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples. In Beijing in 1995 they submitted proposals that are still applicable in the last decades and have been used for advocacy by Indigenous Women in different local, national, regional and international levels, as evidenced in CSW Resolution 49² on Indigenous Women, Convention on Biological Diversity, climate change negotiations, and recommendations of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Outcome Document of the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples (2014). It is worth noting that Indigenous





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Women not only advocate for their rights in all their interventions, but also for the **collective rights of Mother Earth and Indigenous Peoples**.

Peoples' historical struggle with the acknowledged participation of women has led to the approval and implementation of **Political Constitutions that recognize and integrate Indigenous and female leadership**, as the Plurinational State of Bolivia, for example, that implemented democratic participation of Indigenous Women in the Legislative Assembly. The Plurinational State of Bolivia has recognized their leadership in social organizations, including members of the Bartolina Sisa National Confederation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Native Women of Bolivia, for their economic endeavors and historical leadership. The appointment of Indigenous Women in relevant positions, as with María-Eugenia Choque for the Presidency of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Bolivia, shows progress towards the recognition of Indigenous women's political rights.

At local levels, a certain degree of **awareness of the patriarchal structure of Indigenous communities** has allowed changes to protect women, as with the Cordillera community in the Philippines, where Indigenous Women can now inherit land thanks to women's activism and coordination activities.

Indigenous Women political participation also have an influence on their **sustainability**. By reaching **local and/or national advocacy spaces, as well as other decision making spaces**, they improve their opportunities to **implement politics, economic measures or programs that include** this priority. They promote small businesses and innovation based on their traditional knowledge and leadership, and by this way create new opportunities and improve the community wellbeing for themselves, their family, their community and the environment.³

¹ Empowering to guarantee full, active and innovative participation of Indigenous women and strengthening leadership, CEIMM - Multi-Ethnic Women's Studies and Information Centre, University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN).

² CSW49 (2005): Resolution 49/7(E/CN.6/2005/11)



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However, this growing empowerment is threatened by increasingly aggressive land and natural resource grabbing, political repression, criminalization of Indigenous Peoples and Women, including gender-based attacks. Many development policies do not incorporate elements related to the gender and culture of Indigenous Peoples, their specific needs, aspirations and well-being, thus violating their right to self-determination. This affects particularly women who lead the struggle to defend territories and natural resources. By taking the lead they are not only exposed to criminalization and possible attacks by those involved in the conflict (private security companies, mercenaries, police, military, paramilitary, etc.), but their family and community are also at risk. However, they take on leadership roles with determination, despite endangering their lives.

However, all of these achievements are not guaranteed because a change of government in the countries where Indigenous Peoples live can overturn important successes without a warning, as it happened in several countries of South America, like Ecuador, Brazil and, more recently, the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Moreover, the recent global Covid-19 crisis highlighted the failure of some States to respond in an adequate way and with responsibility to this extreme context. In regard with the economic and sanitary vulnerability of some segments, such as Indigenous Women, strengthening their leadership in key decision making spaces is imperative to give an efficient and adequate response to these challenges.

³ Lindsay Bigda, RRI, 22.05.2019, Case for optimism: Real world success stories of Indigenous and community women claiming their rights, https://rightsandresources.org/en/blog/case-for-optimism-womens-land-rights/#.XsUDIMZS_OQ



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Guiding questions:

- What are some **political advocacy spaces** where Indigenous women participate in your country or community? Are there examples of **good practices**?
- What are some obstacles faced by Indigenous women leaders in your community to reach these spaces?
- What is the level of political empowerment of women in your community? What are some **lessons learned**?
- In your experience, how can we **amplify** these advocacy spaces?
- Do men in your community support women's political empowerment?
- Which are the impacts of women leadership on Indigenous Women sustainability? Conversely, how sustainability impacts the political participation of Indigenous Women?
- What is the role elder women endorse in the transmission of political leadership? How does the different levels of political participation articulate with intergenerational dialogue?

