



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

UNESCO  
POLICY ON  
ENGAGING  
WITH INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLES



# FORWARD

---

Living manifestations of cultural diversity, repositories of thousands of rare languages, essential partners in building knowledge societies and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, indigenous peoples, whose societies are also among the most vulnerable in the world, are at the heart of the preoccupations that breathe life into UNESCO's mandate. It was therefore urgent for our Organization to engage in an in-depth reflection on how to take the measure of our own contributions to one of the defining challenges of our time. This has now been accomplished through the elaboration of the "UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples". Through this policy, UNESCO reaffirms its commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I am pleased that this publication now makes the UNESCO Policy readily available to a large public.

Relegated to the economic, social and political margins of society, indigenous peoples find themselves marginalized, perhaps first and foremost, within our own minds. Whether it takes the form of a racism that is explicit or prejudices that are largely unconscious, misrepresentations persist that associate indigenous peoples with the past rather than the present. Indigenous peoples are not the "roots" or foundation of humanity. They constitute the structural core of society today, like all of our contemporaries. Their contemporaneity, their right to a present that is just and enduring, cannot be denied by invoking the historical continuity of their social representations and cultural practices. As peoples of this century, indigenous peoples should not be confined to a lesser condition of humanity. To this work of justice, UNESCO is fully committed.

---

**Audrey Azoulay**  
Director-General  
UNESCO

# CONTENTS

◆ BACKGROUND	4	
◆ INTRODUCTION	7	
◆ PART A. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS, AS DEFINED IN THE UNDRIP OF SPECIFIC RELEVANCE FOR UNESCO'S WORK	9	
◆ PART B. APPLICATION OF THE UNDRIP TO THE ORGANIZATION'S MANDATED AREAS	11	
◆ B.1. UNESCO'S WORK IN EDUCATION	11	
◆ B.2. UNESCO'S WORK IN THE NATURAL SCIENCES	14	
◆ B.3. UNESCO'S WORK IN RELATION TO THE OCEAN	19	
◆ B.4. UNESCO'S WORK IN THE SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES	19	
◆ B.5. UNESCO'S WORK IN CULTURE	22	
◆ B.6. UNESCO'S WORK IN COMMUNICATION	27	
◆ B.7. GENDER EQUALITY	31	
◆ PART C. MECHANISMS FOR MAINSTREAMING THE UNESCO POLICY ON ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES	33	
◆ C.1. PROGRAMME COORDINATION	33	
◆ C.2. INFORMATION SHARING	34	
◆ C.3. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION	35	
◆ C.4. MAINSTREAMING THE POLICY IN UNESCO'S PROGRAMME PLANNING, MONITORING AND REPORTING	35	

# BACKGROUND

---

UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for the period 2014-2021 affirms that "the Organization will implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) across all relevant programme areas" and develop and implement "a UNESCO-wide policy on engaging with indigenous peoples".

The development of this policy was initiated with a scoping of UNESCO activities of relevance to indigenous peoples, and then followed by meetings and dialogue workshops with indigenous peoples and UNESCO staff. Based on these inputs, an intersectoral working group consisting of staff from all programme sectors and support services prepared an initial draft of the UNESCO Policy. Consultations were held with UNESCO Member States, and the comments received were incorporated into the draft text. The draft Policy on engaging with indigenous peoples was considered by the UNESCO Executive Board at both its 201st and 202nd session.

The UNESCO Executive Board took note of the policy with satisfaction at its 202nd session in October 2017.

The UNESCO Policy on engaging with indigenous peoples guides the Organization's work, in all areas of its mandate, that involve or are relevant for indigenous peoples and of potential benefit or risk to them. It ensures that the Organization's policies, planning, programming and implementation uphold the UNDRIP.

## ♦ UNESCO POLICY ON ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (202 EX/9; 202 EX/50)

The Executive Board,

- 1.** Having discussed at its 201st session document 201 EX/6 that includes as an Annex the draft UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples,
- 2.** Having engaged in further written and other consultations with Member States on that draft UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples,
- 3.** Having examined document 202 EX/9 and the revised draft UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples in annex thereto,
- 4.** Stressing the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a document of reference for indigenous peoples,
- 5.** Recognizing that, in accordance with Article 46 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous



Peoples, nothing in the UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples “may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States”,

**6.** Expresses its gratitude to the Director-General for the efforts made to revise the draft UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples, based on discussions during its 201st session, the information meetings held on 2 February and 12 July 2017, and written consultations with Member States;

**7.** Takes note with satisfaction of the revised draft UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples contained in annex to document 202 EX/9 as a living document;

**8.** Calls on the Director-General to produce a document detailing UNESCO’s

application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to the Organization’s fields of competence;

**9.** Calls on Member States to make voluntary financial and in-kind contributions to support the implementation of UNESCO’s programmes and activities in line with the UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples;

**10.** Invites the Director-General and Member States to seek extrabudgetary resources to enable the development of intersectoral projects of relevance to indigenous peoples;

**11.** Requests the Director-General to implement activities in the context of document 39 C/5, framed by the UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples, and to report on progress made thereon in the statutory reports (EX/4) on the execution of the programme (39 C/5).

**(202 EX/SR.11)**



# UNESCO POLICY ON ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES<sup>1</sup>

---

**1.** As stated in its Constitution<sup>2</sup>, UNESCO pursues “universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion”.

**2.** The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity designates the defense of cultural diversity as “an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples” (Article 4)<sup>3</sup>. These human rights are at the heart of UNESCO’s mandate and are included in the United Nations Declaration on the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)<sup>4</sup>, human rights treaties, and other related international documents.

**3.** As part of the United Nations system, the UNESCO Secretariat is also committed to promote the human rights based approach in its programming, as defined in the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Guidelines on the Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation<sup>5</sup> and its Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues<sup>6</sup>. This includes as stated in Article 41 of the UNDRIP, contributing to the full realization of the provisions of this Declaration, subject only to such limitations as are determined by law and in accordance with international human rights obligations (UNDRIP, Article 46).

---

<sup>1</sup> Nothing in this policy may be construed as diminishing or extinguishing the rights indigenous peoples have now or may acquire in the future (from UNDRIP Article 45).

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO. 2016. Basic texts. A. Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Available online at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002439/243996e.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. 2001, UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. 2007. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007. A/RES/61/295. Available online at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/512/07/PDF/N0651207.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>5</sup> UN Development Group. 2003. The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies. Available online at: [https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/6959-The\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Based\\_Approach\\_to\\_Development\\_Cooperation\\_Towards\\_a\\_Common\\_Understanding\\_among\\_UN.pdf](https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/6959-The_Human_Rights_Based_Approach_to_Development_Cooperation_Towards_a_Common_Understanding_among_UN.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> UN Development Group. 2008. Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples Issues. Available online at: [https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/UNDG\\_guidelines\\_EN.pdf](https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/UNDG_guidelines_EN.pdf)

**4.** The UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples supports the efforts of the Secretariat to implement the UNDRIP across all relevant programme areas, as outlined in the Overarching Objectives of the current Medium-Term Strategy (37 C/4 2014-2021, para 20)<sup>7</sup>. It reinforces UNESCO's contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations system-wide action plan<sup>8</sup> for ensuring a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**5.** Consistent with UNDRIP Article 46, nothing in this policy "may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or

person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States".

**6.** The policy consists of:

**Part A.** Indigenous peoples rights, as defined in the UNDRIP, of specific relevance for UNESCO's work

**Part B.** Application of the UNDRIP to the Organization's mandated areas

**Part C.** Mechanisms for mainstreaming UNESCO's policy on engaging with indigenous peoples.

---

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO.2014. 37 C/4 2014-2021. Medium-Term Strategy. Available online at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/bureau-of-strategic-planning/resources/medium-term-strategy-c4/>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations. 2016. System-wide action plan for ensuring a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. E/C.19/2016/5. Available online at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/15th-session/SYSTEM-WIDE-ACTION-PLAN-FOR-ENSURING-A-COHERENT-APPROACH.pdf>



## ◆ PART A. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS, AS DEFINED IN THE UNDRIP, OF SPECIFIC RELEVANCE FOR UNESCO'S WORK



**7.** The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. Consistent with Article 41 of the UNDRIP, UNESCO, as a specialized agency of the UN, is “committed to the full realization of the provisions of the Declaration”.

**8.** UNESCO’s engagement with indigenous peoples is framed by the following provisions from the UNDRIP which are of specific relevance to the Organization’s mandated areas of work.

**9. Human rights and fundamental freedoms** – Article 1 of the UNDRIP states that “indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law”.

**10. Equality and non-discrimination** – Article 2 of the UNDRIP states that “indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be

free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity”.

**11. Self-determination, participation, and free, prior and informed consent** – Article 3 of the UNDRIP states that “indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination”. They “have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs”, as stated in UNDRIP Article 4. Article 41 of the UNDRIP pertaining to “organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations”, states that “ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them shall be established”. Article 19 states that “States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them” (see also Articles 10, 11, 20, 28 and 32).

## **12. Cultural heritage, knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and languages**

– Article 11 of the UNDRIP states that indigenous peoples “have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs”. Article 31 states that indigenous peoples also “have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures”. Article 31 goes on to state that they “also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions”. According to Article 13, indigenous peoples have the “right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons” (see also Article 8, 9, 16, 24).

## **13. Development with culture and identity**

– Article 23 of the UNDRIP states that indigenous peoples “have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development”. Article 15 of the UNDRIP states that indigenous peoples “have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information”. Indigenous

peoples “have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning”, as stated in UNDRIP Article 14 (see also Articles 11, 12 and 17).

## **14. Conservation and protection of environment**

– Article 29 of the UNDRIP states that indigenous peoples have the “right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources”. This includes the “right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources” (Article 25). Article 10 of UNDRIP also states that indigenous peoples “shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without their free, prior and informed consent” (see also Articles 25, 26, 27, 28, 30 and 32).

**15. Gender equality** – Indigenous women and girls may face multiple forms of discrimination, both within their local communities and externally, due to their gender as well as their indigenous identity. It is essential to recognize and respect the different roles, needs, priorities, knowledge, perspectives and contributions of indigenous women, girls, men and boys within their communities and society as a whole, while promoting gender equality (see Articles 21 and 22).

## ♦ PART B. APPLICATION OF THE UNDRIP TO THE ORGANIZATION'S MANDATED AREAS




### ♦ B.1. UNESCO'S WORK IN EDUCATION AND THE ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

**16.** Education is important for the full development of the human personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to reach one's full potential, as well as for the strengthening of the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. UNESCO promotes education as a human right as well as a foundation for peace-building and inclusive sustainable development. Through its humanist and holistic approach to education, the Organization strives to foster the development of balanced education systems, in which everyone has equal opportunity for meaningful lifelong learning, delivered through multiple formal, non-formal and informal pathways. It seeks to ensure that education and learning systems are inclusive and reflect the diversity of all learners. It gives particular attention to achieving gender equality in education by mainstreaming gender in and through education, and through gender-specific programming in

targeted programme areas. In addition, UNESCO gives priority to those countries or population groups (such as indigenous peoples) considered most in need, lagging or left behind in reaching international development goals.

**17.** UNESCO's work on engagement with indigenous peoples in education is grounded in its mid-term strategy (C/4) and programmes (C/5), and guided by relevant normative instruments and evolving international policy frameworks, notably the UNDRIP and the outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/69/2) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2014.

**18.** Indigenous peoples are entitled to rights related to education as enshrined in the UNDRIP. Any activities that create hatred, systematic discrimination or marginalization against indigenous peoples need to be avoided. Access to quality education remains a challenge, in part due to multiple, and often interlinked reasons of a social, economic, political and cultural nature. Typical



barriers resulting in their educational marginalization include long distances to school or learning centres; work demands; limited access to electricity and the Internet; the use of language which is not understood and/or mastered by indigenous peoples in teaching and learning; insufficient relevance of learning content to their cultures and lives; limited financial means; and discrimination in schools. Indigenous children are less likely to enroll in school and more likely to repeat than non-indigenous children. Indigenous girls tend to be more marginalized, often being expected to perform domestic chores and care for siblings and other children. In many places, learning programmes for indigenous youth and adults are far from sufficient both in quantity and quality. Even if indigenous persons are enrolled in school or educational programmes in and outside school, the quality of provision is not always adequate. Deprivation of access to quality learning opportunities tends to create a vicious circle, by contributing to further social marginalization, poverty and dispossession of indigenous peoples and the reproduction of social and cumulative disadvantages.

**19.** Effectively including indigenous peoples' knowledge, holistic worldviews and cultures in the development of education policies, programmes, projects and practices and promoting their perspectives, would provide meaningful learning opportunities that are equally available, accessible, acceptable and appropriate for all indigenous peoples. This

would be an inclusive, holistic approach to education, as well as corresponding education systems and institutions, that can embrace a culture of peace, indigenous languages and lifestyles, knowledge systems, histories, spiritual values, physical activities and indigenous peoples' worldviews to foster their self-determination and empowerment. Such an inclusive, holistic approach will also enable indigenous peoples to share their cultural, spiritual, linguistic and traditional knowledge and techniques, which represent substantial elements of human wisdom and heritage, to enrich education systems.

**20.** In recognition of the above-mentioned challenges and particularities, UNESCO adheres to the normative and policy framework mentioned in the introduction and to the more specific policy provisions listed below. Since education is a key catalyst for positive development and transformation in economic, social, political and cultural domains, these provisions are applicable beyond the Organization's work in education, while its work in education will pay due respect to relevant policy provisions of other UNESCO sectors. In so doing, UNESCO ensures inclusion and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples to enhance holistic education systems, governance, policies and programmes to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially its Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. A particular focus

is given to achieving gender equality in education.

## Equitable access to lifelong learning

---

**21.** UNESCO promotes the equitable access of indigenous peoples to quality lifelong learning opportunities through improving infrastructure and learning environments so as to fit with cultural practice; promoting both conventional and innovative modes of delivery in formal, non-formal and informal settings, including the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education.

**22.** UNESCO enhances education systems so that learners can move within and across formal, non-formal and informal pathways through building frameworks for recognition, validation and accreditation of learning outcomes and prior knowledge and skills.

**23.** UNESCO supports countries in developing inclusive<sup>9</sup> national education policies to respond to the learning needs of everyone, including indigenous peoples.

## Quality and relevance of teaching and learning

---


**24.** UNESCO promotes quality teaching and learning that are sensitive to

indigenous peoples' cultures, languages, lifestyles, traditions, world views, aspirations and knowledge systems, as well as gender equality, in particular through the following:

- **(a)** Supporting indigenous peoples' mother tongue-based education in a multilingual education approach in formal, non-formal and informal settings.
- **(b)** Encouraging education models and practices, including curricula, teaching and learning materials, pedagogies, teaching and learning environments, that are non-assimilatory, and are respectful and sensitive to indigenous peoples' rights, identities, perspectives, cultures, traditional knowledge, experiences and aspirations, as well as their contexts and profiles, including gender, age and their geographical location.
- **(c)** Encouraging education models and practices that are non-assimilatory, culturally sensitive and respect and support indigenous peoples' identities, cultural integrity and rights.
- **(d)** Recognizing and facilitating the integration of traditional knowledge, where desired by and with the free, prior and informed consent of the knowledge holders, into curriculum and teaching practice for both indigenous and non-

---

<sup>9</sup> Inclusion is seen as "a process that helps to overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners" (UNESCO 2017, A guide for ensuring inclusion and equality in education).



indigenous learners and promoting the intergenerational transmission of such knowledge.

- **(e)** Promoting education related to human rights, peace, tolerance, intercultural understanding and citizenship to enable both indigenous and non-indigenous persons to live together without prejudice, discrimination, violence and conflicts.

### **Monitoring the right to education**

---

**25.** UNESCO promotes the right to education for indigenous peoples and the reinforced monitoring of the implementation of the right to education through regular consultations with Member States and examination of their reports on the implementation of the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education and other UNESCO normative instruments and through participation in the monitoring of other UN normative instruments.

**26.** UNESCO recognizes and strives for reinforced integration of issues related to indigenous peoples in monitoring work related to normative instruments, international development goals and other frameworks, including Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **Enhancing a knowledge and evidence base**

---

**27.** UNESCO strengthens a knowledge

and evidence base on education and learning for indigenous peoples through research on their participation in education, the relevance and outcomes of education and learning, related policies, programmes and curricula, and the obstacles faced in accessing and benefiting from learning opportunities, as well as through the collection and dissemination of effective policies and practices.

### **Advocacy and awareness-raising**

---

**28.** Using different opportunities (e.g. International Days, including the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, and meetings such as annual sessions of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), UNESCO raises awareness of the specific concerns of indigenous peoples and their educational aspirations, needs and challenges.

**29.** UNESCO advocates for increased attention and resources to meet the learning needs of indigenous peoples through enhanced education systems, governance, policies and practices.

### **◆ B.2. UNESCO'S WORK IN THE NATURAL SCIENCES AND THE ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**30.** UNESCO works to advance and

promote science in the interests of peace, sustainable development and human security and well-being. It does this by catalyzing international cooperation in science; promoting dialogue between scientists, policy-makers and stakeholders; assisting countries in formulating, reviewing and implementing their national STI policy; building capacity in science; advocating for science; acting as a platform for sharing ideas and standard-setting; and implementing programmes and projects in science throughout the world. UNESCO hosts major international programmes in the freshwater, ecological, earth and basic sciences. Two of these programmes, the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) and the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP) involve UNESCO-designated sites that may include protected areas.<sup>10</sup> Science policy at the national and sectoral levels is a key part of UNESCO's work in the basic and natural sciences. Emphasis is given to developing countries, in particular to Africa, and to ensuring gender equality in science. Themes of relevance across the sector's programmes include disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, geodiversity, engineering, science education, climate change and sustainable development in small island developing States (SIDS). UNESCO's Natural Sciences Sector also houses the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme.

**31.** The Natural Sciences Sector collaborates with other intergovernmental processes and agencies to improve the science-policy-society interface. While the Natural Sciences Sector covers some of the thematic areas from which indigenous peoples have been most excluded, it has recognized that making the scientific endeavour more inclusive of indigenous peoples brings benefits not only to indigenous peoples, but also to the sciences. By engaging with indigenous peoples, understanding of major global environmental issues such as biodiversity loss and climate change can be advanced.


**32.** By recognizing and valuing other knowledge systems, science and technology may develop new insights of relevance to engineering, water management and sustainable development among others. But scientific advances and innovations should also bring benefits to indigenous peoples. Therefore, steps should be taken to overcome the multiple barriers that prevent indigenous peoples from fully enjoying the benefits of science, technology and innovation.

### **Indigenous peoples' knowledge**

**33.** UNESCO recognizes indigenous peoples' knowledge as knowledge systems in their own right, on par with scientific disciplines and programmes. UNESCO

---

<sup>10</sup> For World Heritage properties, see Section B.5. UNESCO's work in Culture and the engagement with indigenous peoples.



recognizes indigenous peoples' resource management systems, know-how, practices and governance structures as valuable components of sustainable development for their communities.

**34.** UNESCO, particularly through its LINKS, IHP, MAB and IGGP programmes, works to ensure the dialogue and co-production of knowledge between indigenous peoples and scientists to identify, understand and address economic, environmental, ethical, cultural and societal challenges, including global environmental changes.

**35.** UNESCO supports awareness raising and capacity building for scientists, policy-makers and indigenous peoples to improve mutual respect, dialogue across knowledge systems, and more effective partnerships among these constituencies.

**36.** UNESCO works to ensure appropriate consideration of indigenous knowledge in international processes and environmental assessments.

**37.** UNESCO supports the transmission, revitalization, safeguarding and protection of traditional knowledge.

## **Science, technology and innovation**

---

**38.** Indigenous peoples are under-represented at all levels in the sciences. Not only do few indigenous individuals study and pursue a career in the sciences,

but their concerns and priorities are often not reflected in national and international science, technology and innovation (STI) policies, strategies and action plans.

**39.** UNESCO, through its International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP), supports measures to improve inclusion and participation of indigenous peoples, particularly youth and women, in the basic sciences and engineering.

**40.** UNESCO works to ensure respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and their effective participation at all levels of the STI endeavour in issues affecting them, including the design, implementation and monitoring of STI policies.

**41.** In its work to support the development or implementation of national or subnational STI policies, UNESCO aims to promote STI policies that:

- **(a)** recognize the role and value of indigenous knowledge and to that end are designed and implemented with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in issues affecting them; and
- **(b)** stipulate ways and means for greater inclusion of indigenous peoples in science.

**42.** To monitor and map the participation of indigenous peoples in STI, UNESCO aims at including information on their participation in STI in the framework of the UNESCO Science Report series. In order to obtain the necessary information, a specific



project will be developed in cooperation between the Natural Sciences Sector and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

**43.** UNESCO, in partnership with the global and regional networks of science museums and centres, promotes the development and implementation of science communication tools, such as travelling exhibitions, in indigenous languages and aimed at raising scientific literacy with indigenous people, in constant dialogue between science and indigenous knowledge systems. Similar approaches are taken towards Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education.

### **Biodiversity, ecology and earth sciences, including biosphere reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks**

---

**44.** Consistent with Article 26 of the UNDRIP regarding indigenous peoples' rights to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, UNESCO underscores that:


- **(a)** In all its relevant activities, and in the implementation of its normative instruments, UNESCO respects the rights and role of indigenous peoples and their knowledge in the creation, maintenance and enrichment of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem services. This includes pursuing the maintenance of both cultural and

biological diversity and safeguarding the relationship between the two. It also includes recognizing indigenous peoples' sacred sites, and taking appropriate steps to ensure that these remain intact and are not used or treated inappropriately.

- **(b)** UNESCO does not support the removal of indigenous peoples from their lands and territories in any conservation or sustainable development project or programme in which UNESCO is involved, including the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of the Man and the Biosphere programme and UNESCO Global Geoparks.

- **(c)** UNESCO's MAB programme requires cultural and social impact assessments in the application for biosphere reserve designation. Biosphere reserves are encouraged to consider and respect indigenous and customary rights through programmes or tools, consistent with the UNDRIP.

- **(d)** UNESCO Global Geoparks, through the IGGP, works to ensure the active involvement of local communities, and indigenous peoples as key stakeholders, among others, in UNESCO Global Geoparks, through the development and implementation of co-management plans that provide for the social and economic needs of local populations, protect the landscape in which they live and conserve their cultural identity. Indigenous knowledge, practice and management systems should be included, alongside



science, in the planning and management of the area.

## Climate change

---

**45.** UNESCO recognizes that indigenous peoples are among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and that they contribute importantly to observing and understanding climate change impacts, as well as to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

**46.** UNESCO supports indigenous peoples' development of community-based observing systems and solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, based on indigenous knowledge, innovations and practices.

**47.** UNESCO seeks to ensure that indigenous peoples' rights are duly reflected in the implementation of the UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change.

## Disaster risk reduction

---

**48.** UNESCO recognizes that indigenous peoples are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by disasters. However, their knowledge and practices may offer innovative solutions to reducing risk, for example through fire management or tsunami warning. Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, can make an important contribution to the development and implementation of disaster risk reduction

(DRR) plans and mechanisms, including for early warning.

**49.** UNESCO encourages targeted and culturally appropriate support to indigenous peoples in order to enhance disaster risk reduction at all stages and levels, including the design and implementation of DRR strategies and projects.

**50.** In post-disaster, post-conflict situations, UNESCO supports and, where appropriate, assists in the revitalization of indigenous peoples' culture, including their knowledge and social and governance structures, recognizing that they are fundamental to indigenous peoples' resilience.

**51.** UNESCO works to ensure that indigenous knowledge and practices, as appropriate, are used to complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and in the development and implementation of context-specific DRR policies, strategies, plans and programmes.

## Water

---

**52.** Indigenous peoples' perspectives on the protection and access to all sources of water and its sacred role as well as the human right to water and sanitation (as defined by UN A/RES/ 64/292) is all too often ignored. Indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to marginalization, displacement, water pollution and the neglect of their rights to water. UNESCO will work with indigenous peoples to address the risks that may jeopardize

their water security and their right to safe, clean, accessible and affordable water for personal, domestic and community use.

**53.** UNESCO recognizes that indigenous peoples have developed sustainable and sophisticated systems of managing water for their use and livelihoods. These systems hold the keys to sustainability pathways that may be valid beyond the cultural sphere in which they were originally conceived. The safeguarding and development of these systems are valued and indigenous peoples' knowledge will be considered in UNESCO's activities related to water.

**54.** Considering that the Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration and related statements contribute to the formulation of indigenous peoples' water-related issues and priorities, UNESCO promotes the rights of indigenous peoples and the inclusion of relevant issues in work programmes, the water-related international development agenda, scientific and policy-making processes and international standards (e.g. through ethical guidelines).

### ◆ B.3. UNESCO'S WORK IN RELATION TO THE OCEAN AND THE ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

**55.** The livelihoods of many indigenous peoples are associated with marine and coastal areas and their ecosystems. UNESCO and its Intergovernmental

Oceanographic Commission (IOC) recognizes, respects and values the corresponding knowledge and strategies of indigenous peoples.

**56.** UNESCO works to ensure the appropriate inclusion of indigenous peoples' knowledge of the ocean and seas in the development of science-based approaches to sustainable management of marine and coastal regions, their ecosystems, and the protection of living and non-living resources of the ocean.

### ◆ B.4. UNESCO'S WORK IN THE SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES AND THE ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

**57.** The Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS) aims at advancing social science knowledge, implementing international standards and fostering intellectual cooperation with a view to facilitating social transformations conducive to the universal values of justice, freedom and human dignity. Social transformations may also lead to growing social instability, rising inequalities, marginalization and intolerance. Regarding indigenous peoples, the work of the Social and Human Sciences Sector is informed by the realization that they continue to be confronted with poverty and human rights violations and abuses. Through partnerships with indigenous peoples, the Social and Human Sciences Sector seeks to support them in addressing the multiple challenges they face, while acknowledging their significant role in



sustaining the diversity of the world's cultural and biological landscape.

**58.** The following selected work streams take into account the promotion of the inclusion, rights and needs of indigenous peoples, drawing from relevant international human rights instruments.

## **Social inclusion and rights**

---

**59.** The work on inclusion and rights addresses all forms of discrimination and fosters a culture of inclusion and rights through advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives as part of an integrated approach to programme delivery, in partnership with Member States, civil society and other stakeholders and interest groups. The work focuses on fostering human rights, gender equality and a sense of global citizenship, particularly through city-level policy and practice; promoting inclusion and diversity by fighting discrimination and racism; and promoting the rights of indigenous peoples by tackling persistent and emerging stereotypes and prejudices.

**60.** Through the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR, the various regional and national 10-Point Plans of Action (such as the ones of Latin American and the Caribbean, and of Canada) make strong references to indigenous peoples. A good example is the introductory manual on “Anti-racism and anti-discrimination for municipalities”, prepared by the Ontario Human Rights

Commission, that provides good practices at municipal level that favour indigenous peoples in several areas, such as data collection, monitoring and reporting, and policy development.

## **Research, policy, foresight**

---

**61.** The UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab offers an analytical framework for assessing policies as well as web-based tools to compile information, share expertise and provide practical support to policy design and implementation. Its focus on the multidimensional and intersectional aspects of social inclusion, as well as the connections between inclusive objectives and outcomes and participation of policy design and implementation, lends itself to application to the specific issues of indigenous peoples.

## **Intercultural dialogue**

---

**62.** An important dimension of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures is to encourage increased awareness of history and the relationships developed between cultures and civilizations, and highlight processes which have spurred intercultural dialogue and the rapprochement of cultures, particularly in regards to the effective roles of women, youth and minorities and indigenous peoples, whose effect on societies has often been overlooked. The Action Plan for the Decade therefore includes the promotion of the rich body of traditional and

indigenous knowledge systems within and beyond nations as a resource of values, attitudes and behaviours to inform policies and practices for resilient and sustainable ecosystems.

## Sports and games

---

**63.** The Preamble of UNESCO's Revised International Charter on Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (2015) acknowledges inter alia that cultural diversity in physical education, physical activity and sport forms part of humanity's intangible heritage and includes physical play, recreation, dance, organized, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games. Indigenous peoples practice an uncountable variety of such cultural expressions. Some manifestations of this kind also figure on the Lists of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. As part of its endeavour to guide Member States in the design and development of integrated national physical education and sport policies, UNESCO will pay particular attention to the safeguarding and promotion of these traditional sports and games.

## Youth

---

**64.** The Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021) pays specific attention to vulnerable, including indigenous, youth. In this framework, UNESCO works to ensure that the views, needs, expectations and aspirations of vulnerable youth groups are integrated into policies and programmes

aimed at young women and men. Thus, the UNESCO framework and policy checklist advises that youth policies be based on disaggregated data on the youth cohort, including potentially vulnerable and at risk youth, and that the process includes the prior identification and participation. As a specific example, UNESCO has provided technical advice and support to the Government of Costa Rica on the inclusion of indigenous and Afro-descendant youth in social and political life, with a focus on employment and violence prevention.

## Bioethics


---

**65.** Indigenous peoples' concerns have been a crucial consideration in some of UNESCO's work on the ethics of science and bioethics. For example, the preamble of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights recognized that health does not depend solely on scientific and technological research developments but also on psychosocial and cultural factors; and that a person's identity includes biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions. In 2013, the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) issued a report on Traditional Medicine Systems and their Ethical Implication, which contains recommendations that resonate with the concerns of indigenous peoples.

## Shared history and memory for reconciliation and dialogue

---

**66.** Indigenous peoples and people of African descent are among the most



marginalized and vulnerable populations in different parts of the world. They continue to be subject to racism, racial prejudices and discrimination inherited from a history marked by extermination, enslavement, colonization and exploitation. Through its Slave Route and General and Regional Histories projects, UNESCO is developing scientific knowledge on this legacy and its impact on these two categories of populations and is encouraging the formulation of public policies to redress these historical injustice and inequalities.

**67.** Through the Organization's "Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples", SHS endeavours to:

- **(a)** encourage the development of public policies of concerned indigenous peoples, as well as their effective participation in a culturally-appropriate manner, with a particular focus on young women and men;
- **(b)** promote the creation and strengthening of national structures for young people which ensure the representation of indigenous youth at local, national and global levels, including leadership and capacity-building opportunities in all spheres of society;
- **(c)** encourage cities and municipalities in the International Coalition of Inclusive Cities and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR, to adhere to their commitments in their Ten-Point Plan of Action to promote respect

and safeguard diversity, including dialogue with diverse communities and indigenous peoples; and

- **(d)** reinforce international cooperation in bioethics, taking into account, in particular, the needs of indigenous peoples, recognizing that unethical scientific and technological conduct has had a particular impact on indigenous peoples.

### ◆ **B.5. UNESCO'S WORK IN CULTURE AND THE ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**68.** As the only specialized agency of the United Nations with a specific mandate in the field of culture, UNESCO has a primary role to play in protecting and promoting culture in all its diversity. UNESCO is fully aware that achieving these objectives requires the effective involvement of all actors and stakeholders concerned and, in particular, indigenous peoples, who are recognized as stewards of a significant part of the world's biological, cultural and linguistic diversity.

**69.** A number of UNESCO normative instruments in the form of conventions, declarations or recommendations promote cultural diversity. They constitute the cornerstones of international cultural heritage law. These include in particular:

- The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954)

- The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970)
- The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)
- The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001)
- The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)
- The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)
- The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)
- The Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society (2015).


**70.** While each normative instrument has a specific history, focus and goals, all are driven by the specific mandate that has been entrusted to UNESCO to promote culture in its diversity, through international cooperation and dialogue, based upon respect for shared values, human rights and the dignity of all cultures.

**71.** The UNESCO General Conference strongly reiterated its mandate in the field of culture in 2001 with the adoption of

the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which contains specific references to the relationship between cultural diversity and human rights. It points to human rights as guarantees for cultural diversity, affirming that the defence of cultural diversity implies “a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples”. It states that “No one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope” (Article 4). Thus, from 2001 onwards, indigenous peoples were recognized in UNESCO’s standard-setting work and their cultures were considered as part of the world’s cultural diversity; the defence of this diversity, according to the UNESCO Declaration, is an “ethical imperative”.

**72.** For UNESCO, and in line with the UNDRIP and general provisions of this Policy, indigenous peoples must therefore be considered as stakeholders and rights-holders in social, human and cultural development.

**73.** The UNESCO Declarations, Conventions and Recommendations contain important provisions regarding human rights, participation, community stewardship, customary practices governing access to culture and benefit sharing. Further to the above-mentioned Declaration on Cultural Diversity, two of the more recent Conventions, i.e. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural



Heritage and Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions mention indigenous peoples explicitly. In addition, even if provisions are not explicitly attributed to indigenous peoples, they also apply to them.

**74.** The most recent culture-related legal instrument, although non-binding, the Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society adopted in 2015 has a specific paragraph (18) urging Member States, when appropriate, to engage in dialogues concerning the management and possible return of heritage which can be initiated between indigenous peoples and museums in possession of collections relating to them. It further advocates for the adoption of ethical standards in museums and professional conducts, implying the policies relating to acquisition and calls upon Member States to ensure implementation of applicable international instruments, including the UNDRIP (para. 21).

**75.** In this regard, the governing bodies of UNESCO's Culture Conventions, as well as the governments of States Parties at country level, can play an important role in developing relevant standards, guidance and operational mechanisms to ensure full and effective participation and inclusion of indigenous peoples in the processes of these instruments. Therefore, the implementation of UNESCO's normative instruments in the field of culture can help advance indigenous

peoples' right to, among others, "maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage" as stipulated in Article 31 of the UNDRIP. In this regard, and in light of the holistic worldview of indigenous peoples, UNESCO will seek to seize opportunities to strengthen synergies between the UNESCO Culture Conventions and programmes if and where appropriate and raise awareness about the ways that different forms of heritage, both tangible and intangible, and contemporary cultural expressions are connected.

**76.** Many indigenous peoples face specific challenges related to culture, such as threats to their cultural integrity, distinct lifestyles and languages, as well as to their customary law, often aggravated by assimilatory policies, practices, and development strategies that do not, or insufficiently, take into account culture. They experience discrimination or unfair treatment related to their cultural identity, expressions and heritage, or use of their traditional lands, territories and cultural and natural resources. These challenges are also a reason for UNESCO to ensure that its actions uphold, or at least do not negatively affect, the rights of indigenous peoples.

**77.** In line with all relevant articles of the UNDRIP, UNESCO commits to respect, protect and promote the following policy provisions in its work in the field of culture:


- **(a)** All cultures, including the cultures of indigenous peoples and minorities, should be treated with equal dignity and respect.



- **(b)** Indigenous peoples have rights related to culture, cultural integrity and identity, and hence to full and effective participation in all matters affecting their lives and cultures, taking into account the needs of different groups, as well as their gender.
- **(c)** Indigenous peoples have the right to freely pursue their cultural development and not be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
- **(d)** Indigenous peoples should be able to take part in the development of policies concerning their cultures, cultural expressions and heritage, including through effective participation in relevant consultative bodies and coordination mechanisms.
- **(e)** Indigenous peoples should be able to aspire, maintain, strengthen and transmit to future generations their distinct identity, customs, knowledge, social practices, performing arts, traditional craftsmanship, oral traditions – including language as a vehicle of their intangible cultural heritage – and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in cultural life nationally.
- **(f)** The freedom of indigenous peoples to create, disseminate and distribute their cultural expressions should be respected and the vitality of their cultures recognized.
- **(g)** Indigenous peoples should be supported to create and disseminate their

cultural goods, services and traditional expressions in a fair environment, so that they might benefit from them in the future.

- **(h)** Indigenous peoples' knowledge, cultures, traditional practices and innovations, which they consider in many cases as part of their intangible cultural heritage, are sources of intangible and material wealth and play an important role as a driver and enabler of sustainable and equitable development.
- **(i)** Indigenous peoples – communities, groups and individuals – are the primary agents in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and re-creation of their intangible cultural heritage, and have the right to manifest, practice, revitalize, develop and transmit their intangible cultural heritage, including their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies.
- **(j)** Indigenous peoples have the right to be consulted regarding activities that concern their heritage and cultural expressions and all interactions with regard to their future development should be characterized by transparent collaboration, dialogue, negotiation and consultation.
- **(k)** Indigenous peoples should play a significant role in determining what constitutes threats to their cultural (tangible and intangible) and natural heritage and in deciding how to prevent and mitigate such threats.



- **(l)** Indigenous peoples should have access to specific aspects of their intangible cultural heritage, including the instruments, objects, artefacts, cultural and natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is necessary for expressing their intangible cultural heritage, including in emergency situations.

- **(m)** Customary restrictions on access to their heritage sites and the related indigenous peoples' right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites, should be fully respected even where these may limit broader public access.

- **(n)** Many natural and cultural heritage sites constitute home to or are located within land managed by indigenous peoples, whose land use, knowledge and cultural and spiritual values and practices may depend on, shape or constitute part of the heritage. In such places, indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional lands, territories and resources, and are partners in site conservation and protection activities that recognize traditional management systems as part of new management approaches.

- **(o)** Forced relocation of indigenous peoples from their cultural and natural heritage sites is unacceptable.

- **(p)** Policies, interventions and practices of conservation and management in and around cultural and natural heritage sites<sup>11</sup> should:

- Improve the ability, opportunities and dignity of all, irrespective of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status;

- Promote equity and reduce social and economic inequalities and exclusions of all, irrespective of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status;

- Recognize, respect, and take into account the spiritual and cultural values, the interconnections between biological and cultural diversity as well as cultural and environmental knowledge of indigenous peoples;

- Ensure adequate consultations, the free, prior and informed consent and equitable and effective participation of

---

<sup>11</sup> For World Heritage sites, see Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention, endorsed by the World Heritage Committee (Decision 39 COM 5D, Bonn, 2015) and adopted by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention (Resolution 20 GA 13; UNESCO, 2015, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/20ga/>).

<sup>12</sup> See also paragraphs 40 and 123 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, specifically in relation to the nomination process (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>).

indigenous peoples where nomination, management and policy measures of international designations affect their territories, lands, resources and ways of life<sup>12</sup>; and

- Actively promote indigenous and local initiatives to develop equitable and inclusive governance arrangements, collaborative management systems and, when appropriate, redress mechanisms.
- **(q)** Consideration in the context of UNESCO's work is given solely to such cultural and natural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities.
- **(r)** Indigenous peoples have the right to repatriation of their human remains and States should seek to enable access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in states' possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with the indigenous peoples concerned.
- **(s)** Cultural property should not be used for military purposes and acts of hostility should not be directed against cultural property, including the cultural property of indigenous peoples.
- **(t)** Cultural property in occupied territory should be safeguarded and preserved, for example, by applying measures


that prohibit and prevent illicit export, other removal or transfer of ownership of cultural property; any archaeological excavation, save where this is strictly required to safeguard, record or preserve cultural property; and any alteration to, or change of use of, cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence.

## ◆ B.6. UNESCO'S WORK IN COMMUNICATION AND THE ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

**78.** UNESCO plays a leading role in building inclusive knowledge societies, which are open, inclusive, diverse and participatory and based on four main pillars:

- **(a)** freedom of expression;
- **(b)** access to quality education for all;
- **(c)** respect for cultural and linguistic diversity; and
- **(d)** universal access to information and knowledge, especially in the public domain.

**79.** The Organization plays a leading role globally in the promotion of freedom of expression, press freedom, media development, and universal access to information and knowledge, for building inclusive knowledge societies, as embraced



by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) including through the work of the intergovernmental Information For All Programme (IFAP), as well as the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace, adopted in 2003, and other relevant international normative instruments.

**80.** UNESCO defines inclusive knowledge societies as societies in which people have the capabilities not just to acquire information but also to transform it into knowledge, understanding and goals, which empowers them to enhance their livelihoods and to contribute to the cultural, social and economic development of their societies.

**81.** UNESCO believes that the free flow of information is critical to human experience and progress as it promotes human rights, openness and enhanced livelihoods, and enables sustainable development, social inclusion, democratic governance and a culture of peace. This necessitates supporting the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes as stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. Knowledge-driven economies, where freedom of expression is ensured, play a growing role in global economic growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction.

**82.** Furthermore, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have considerably increased the capacity of all communities, including those of indigenous peoples, to access information and to share experience and practices in almost any part of the world. Technological evolution in the past years has created unprecedented conditions for the exchange of information and ideas, as well as exceptional opportunities for knowledge sharing, strengthening democratic governance, and creating accessible, inclusive, also for persons with disabilities and less used language speakers, participatory and responsive political and social processes, and a culture of peace. But they also transform societies and human behaviour in a manner that requires rethinking existing policies and practices in many spheres, including media, the Internet and education. Therefore, the focus of international attention is shifting from ICT infrastructural development to questions that relate to the use of ICTs, providing opportunities to communities to make their own decisions on integrating ICTs, drawing on local competencies and multilingual content.

**83.** For indigenous peoples, it is of special importance to maintain, strengthen and participate in inclusive knowledge societies for this allows them to have greater access to and share information and education resources, generate income and reinforce self-reliance. Drawing on its substantial expertise, UNESCO is working to

facilitate the development of knowledge societies that are diverse, inclusive, open and participatory for all, especially for indigenous peoples, who are facing specific challenges in terms of communication and information.

**84.** One of the ways UNESCO works is to empower local communities to access, preserve and share information and knowledge concerning all of UNESCO's domains. In this regard, and in keeping with its full commitment to the implementation of the UNDRIP, UNESCO:

### **Freedom of expression through policies and practice**

---

**85.** Designs and implements projects and programmes on awareness-raising, monitoring and advocacy for freedom of expression and access to information; and promote compliance with related internationally-recognized legal, ethical and professional standards that respect, protect, support and promote the rights and interests of indigenous peoples.

**86.** Ensures that the design and implementation of its projects and programmes on empowerment of journalists, particularly women journalists, through international and national campaigns and on capacity-building to ensure their safety also take into account the dangers of impunity, and respect, protect, support and promote the rights and interests of indigenous peoples.


### **Pluralistic media institutions**

---

**87.** Ensures that the design and implementation of its projects and programmes on enhanced media and information literacy (MIL) competencies respect, protect, support and promote the rights and interests of indigenous peoples.

**88.** Consistent with Article 16 of the UNDRIP, respect protect, support and promote the right of indigenous peoples to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without any discrimination.

**89.** Supports and promotes indigenous peoples' to information in indigenous languages through all mediums, including radio and television. Community radio, which is a powerful tool for facilitating social communication and supporting democratic processes within societies, has the potential to reach out to people with little or no access to information with broadcasts in different local languages, including indigenous languages, while allowing them to participate in public debate and transmit their own culture, information and knowledge.



## **Universal access to information, and preservation of indigenous cultural diversity and knowledge through the use of the Open Solutions for Knowledge Societies programme and ICT accessibility**

---

**90.** Works to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples are respected, protected, supported and promoted in the design and implementation of projects and programmes supported or led by UNESCO; for example, relating to:

- **(a)** National policies for universal access to information and knowledge, and provisions contained in normative instruments, such as the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003).
- **(b)** The development and implementation of the Roadmap to transform UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger into a global platform – World Atlas of Languages, for sharing language resources and technological solutions, monitoring and promoting the world's languages, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders and within the context of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.
- **(c)** Specific policy frameworks for the use of ICTs and Open Solutions: open educational resources, open access, free and open source software, open training

platforms, open data and accessible information, including for persons with disabilities, with special emphasis on indigenous teachers, learners, researchers, information professionals and/or scientists.

- **(d)** Encouraging the use of ICTs in teaching, in order to support quality learning environments, for example through the use of the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (ICT CFT).
- **(e)** Policy support initiatives for open, distance, flexible and online (e-learning) education, capitalizing on open solutions, especially among indigenous peoples.
- **(f)** Developing and sharing knowledge resources, including through broadband-enhanced ICTs, mobile devices and Open Solutions including in indigenous languages and indigenous people with disabilities.

**91.** UNESCO promotes and supports indigenous peoples' access to information respectful of cultural diversity.

## **Preservation of and accessibility to indigenous documentary heritage in all its forms**

---

**92.** Works to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples' cultural expressions, cultural and documentary heritage, are respected, safeguarded, promoted and made universally accessible by designing and implementing relevant national, or international projects and programmes

that are, initiated, supported or led by UNESCO. For example, these include UNESCO's activities to support the preservation of documentary heritage, including an emphasis on indigenous heritage, especially in the light of the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form, that will help build partnerships for identifying appropriate solutions to threats, such as the ravages of time, natural hazards, human behaviour and technological obsolescence, so that valuable collections and records, including of indigenous peoples, may never be lost.

### **Implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)**

---

**93.** Works to ensure that the rights and perspectives of indigenous peoples are respected, protected, supported and promoted in UNESCO's support for WSIS cooperation, for knowledge sharing and multi-stakeholder partnership building, including indigenous peoples. UNESCO facilitates WSIS Action Line C8 that has explicit reference to indigenous people.

### **Universal access to information, including through the Information for All Programme (IFAP)**

---

**94.** Encourages that IFAP National Committees include representatives from indigenous peoples.

**95.** Encourages that formal partnerships established with intergovernmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academic institutions to promote cooperation, outreach programmes and policy implementation that have a specific focus on indigenous peoples' rights, interests and issues in IFAP priority areas.

### **♦ B.7. GENDER EQUALITY AND ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**96.** UNESCO is committed to ensure that gender equality as a crosscutting objective is woven tightly into all initiatives related to indigenous peoples and within this framework to recognize and to encourage the distinct and crucial contribution of indigenous women, their knowledge and their vital roles, responsibilities and potential in their families, communities and in society as a whole. In compliance with its Gender Equality Action Plan 2014-2021, UNESCO has a two-prong approach to promoting gender equality in its work with indigenous peoples:

- **(a)** Gender mainstreaming, i.e. taking into account both indigenous women and girls' and indigenous men and boys' perspectives, needs, opportunities and challenges in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programmes and projects within UNESCO's fields of competence involving/affecting/targeting indigenous peoples; and

- **(b)** Gender-specific programming i.e. which specifically targets indigenous women and girls, or men and boys – as the case may be – aiming at reducing or eliminating specific forms of discrimination and inequalities faced by indigenous women or men in a given context.

**97.** In addition, in its work with indigenous peoples, UNESCO will promote gender equality in keeping with all internationally agreed conventions and principles, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

**98.** In its development programmes related to indigenous women, UNESCO will focus on raising awareness, encouraging effective participation and involvement, as well as strengthening capabilities for decision-making concerning indigenous women's own lives. UNESCO's programmes will also actively seek to create new and appropriate opportunities for social change and to foster the empowerment of both indigenous women and men.

**99.** Within each major thematic programme (education, natural and social sciences, culture and communication and information) specific gender equality elements related to indigenous women's and men's issues will focus on the following common features:

- **(a)** Respecting, promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous women in all

programme initiatives and actions.

- **(b)** Multiple and intersectional discriminations that indigenous women may be subject to: as indigenous (from surrounding societies); as female (from within their own communities); as poor, illiterate or with limited formal education: as rural, etc., the result being that indigenous women often face harsher conditions than indigenous men and non-indigenous women in terms of poverty levels, access to education, health and economic resources, political participation, access to land, etc.

- **(c)** Cultural sensitivity in promoting gender equality in the specific contexts of indigenous women and men.

- **(d)** Promotion of positive gender images to fight undesired gender stereotypes within indigenous communities.

- **(e)** Ensuring that programme components address issues of indigenous women's rights and empowerment of indigenous women at both formal (i.e. laws, policies) and informal (i.e. customs and cultural factors) levels.

- **(f)** Domestic and other forms of gender-based violence in an indigenous peoples' context.

- **(g)** Highlighting the key role that indigenous women play in building peace, conflict-resolution and bridging differences within their own, or with surrounding,



societies; and similarly the crucial role of indigenous women in the preservation, enrichment and transmission of culture and practices, and of traditional knowledge and wisdom.

- **(h)** Capacity-building for effective participation and leadership of indigenous women in policy and decision-making processes both within indigenous

communities and at local, national and regional levels.

- **(i)** Developing and supporting partnership with and between indigenous women's groups at local, national, regional and international levels and encouraging their inclusion in project, programme and policy initiatives.

## ◆ PART C. MECHANISMS FOR MAINSTREAMING THE UNESCO POLICY ON ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

◆ PART C



### ◆ C.1. PROGRAMME COORDINATION

**100.** In order to ensure the mainstreaming of the rights of indigenous peoples as defined in the UNDRIP in UNESCO's work, the Organization utilizes the following modalities:

#### Within UNESCO


- **(a)** UNESCO coordinates its work on indigenous issues within its mandate by vesting a house-wide focal point role with the Assistant Director-General (ADG) of a Programme Sector. The first Sector focal point was the Culture Sector. The current

lead ADG is the ADG for the Natural Sciences, with the Chief of the Section for Small Islands and Indigenous Knowledge (SC/PCB/SII) as the coordinating focal point.

- **(b)** The UNESCO working group on indigenous peoples is the main hub for coordinating in-house on indigenous issues. It consists of focal point representatives from all sectors and bureaux.

#### UNESCO's role in the UN System in relation to the UNDRIP

- **(c)** In the United Nations system, three



bodies are mandated to provide technical support on indigenous peoples' issues to the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council. These are the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. UNESCO engages with these bodies through its focal point and working group on indigenous peoples, as part of its efforts to contribute to the UN System-wide action plan (SWAP).

- **(d)** The SWAP aims to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the UNDRIP and promotes enhanced support to Member States and indigenous peoples. Through this policy and as a member of the UN Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, UNESCO participates in achieving the objectives of the SWAP.

- **(e)** UNESCO engages with other UN agencies, funds and programmes, including intergovernmental programmes such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, to implement relevant activities, framed by this policy and within the Organization's mandated areas. This includes engaging in key international summits and intergovernmental conferences, in particular the Conference of Parties for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN Convention on Biodiversity and the World Summit on the Information Society, and the

World Summit on the Information Society, among others.

## ➤ **C.2. INFORMATION SHARING**

**101.** To improve understanding of the work of the Organization and the dissemination of data and policy-relevant analyses, UNESCO supports the following communication modalities:

- **(a)** Provide relevant inputs and updates to the UN System as described in 93(c)-(d), as appropriate and within the areas of its mandate.
- **(b)** Support the Indigenous Fellowship Programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights through provision of briefings on UNESCO and its areas of mandate.
- **(c)** Host a dedicated page on the Organization's web portal that contains information directly relevant for indigenous peoples, including an online interactive knowledge hub containing data, analyses and tools that are of relevance for promoting indigenous peoples' rights and priorities within the Organization's mandated areas of work.
- **(d)** On the occasion of the annual celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, promote indigenous peoples in UNESCO's mandated areas and provide relevant online resources on a web page dedicated to the day. Promote indigenous peoples

on other International Days such as International Women's Day, Cultural Diversity Day, Youth Day, Peace Day, Human Rights Day, among others. This may include dedicated seminar or dialogue with indigenous peoples.

- **(e)** Encourage countries' and partners' translation of policy documents and written materials (e.g. documents papers, guidelines, tools) into indigenous languages.

### ♦ C.3. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

**102.** The Organization provides opportunities to work with indigenous peoples through its mandates in education, the natural sciences, the social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information. To enhance avenues for working with indigenous peoples, UNESCO takes action to:

- **(a)** Improve participation of indigenous peoples' organizations through promoting official partnerships between their organizations and UNESCO.
- **(b)** Encourage the development of extrabudgetary funded project proposals, including intersectoral projects that directly benefit indigenous peoples.
- **(c)** Encourage programme sectors to allocate and decentralize funds to relevant field offices that promote the rights and priorities of indigenous peoples.

### ♦ C.4. MAINSTREAMING THE POLICY IN UNESCO'S PROGRAMME PLANNING, MONITORING AND REPORTING

**103.** UNESCO's main programming and reporting tool, SISTER, will be updated to integrate a new marker dedicated to indigenous peoples thus enabling the identification of projects relevant for indigenous peoples as well as the elaboration of related reports, in line with the policy.

**104.** Within existing resources, the policy may be reviewed periodically, including in consultation with all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples to ensure its continued relevance.

**105.** UNESCO will further promote dialogue and participatory mechanisms between indigenous people, Member States and UNESCO that allows the collection of information on the implementation of activities relevant for indigenous peoples and within the framework of the policy.

## **UNESCO 2018**

UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples.  
201 EX/6

Published by the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France  
© UNESCO 2018  
All rights reserved

Design and Layout: [www.delhambre.com](http://www.delhambre.com)  
Cover images and illustrations: Del Hambre

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this book and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

## **CONTACT**

► Indigenous Peoples Task Team

Focal Point

[indigenouspeoples@unesco.org](mailto:indigenouspeoples@unesco.org)

<https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples>





United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

