

**Contribution of the Pan American Health  
Organization (PAHO/WHO) to the Report of  
the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous  
Issues, Eighteenth Session, 2019**

## Questionnaire

Please provide information on the following:

### A. Recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

With respect to the implementation of the recommendations of the Permanent Forum addressed specifically to your agency, fund and/or programme:<sup>1</sup>

- i. Please provide information on measures taken or planned to implement the recommendations of the Permanent Forum addressed specifically to your organization.

The promotion and protection of the health of indigenous peoples is central to PAHO's mandate. PAHO/WHO Strategic Plan has incorporated Ethnicity as one of the four cross-cutting themes of the Organization. Moreover, a series of resolutions have been approved since 1993 to protect and implement the right to health of indigenous peoples.

In 2019, the Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health for the Region of the Americas was approved by PAHO Member States<sup>2</sup>. With this approval, ministers of health have endorsed a series of actions to ensure that people and communities of all ethnic origins in the Region, have access, without any kind of discrimination, to comprehensive, culturally appropriate, timely and quality health services. The Strategy calls to address the structural discrimination that impedes members of certain ethnic groups, including indigenous peoples, from accessing quality health services. PAHO/WHO will be working closely with ministries of health and indigenous peoples in the Region to implement the Strategy and Action Plan on Ethnicity and Health.

The Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health also responds to the report of the High-Level Commission "Universal Health in the 21st Century: 40 Years of Alma-Ata", which highlights the need to develop people-and community-centered primary health care-based models that take into account human diversity, interculturalism and ethnicity. This Plan follows the approval of the Policy on Ethnicity and Health adopted in September 2017, which constitutes the first UN document to acknowledge the importance of adopting an intercultural approach to addressing inequities in health.

In the field of maternal health, important work has been conducted in countries to address culturally safe birth and promoting knowledge dialogues between indigenous peoples, midwives and health care personnel with PAHO's technical cooperation. PAHO will be reporting on these advances to the members of the Forum.

In 2019, PAHO organized a Regional Meeting on TB and indigenous peoples to promote collaboration with indigenous peoples from the region on this very important topic. PAHO/WHO will continue working to address TB among indigenous peoples through intercultural approaches. Guidelines to address TB among indigenous peoples were developed in PAHO/WHO with the participation of Indigenous Peoples and TB experts from the Region. These guidelines will be implemented at country level.

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<sup>1</sup> See attached document entitled 'Recommendations addressed to the UN Agencies' to facilitate your responses.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_docman&view=download&alias=49791-cd57-13-e-strategy-poa-ethnicity&category\\_slug=cd57-en&Itemid=270&lang=en](https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=49791-cd57-13-e-strategy-poa-ethnicity&category_slug=cd57-en&Itemid=270&lang=en)

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In 2019, PAHO strengthened collaboration with Indigenous global and regional partners and networks involved in the response to HIV and sexually transmitted infections and co-organized, with UNAIDS, the International Indigenous Working Group on HIV/AIDS (IIWGHA) and the International Secretariat of Indigenous Peoples and HIV, sexuality and human rights (SIPIA), a symposium on Ending AIDS in Indigenous communities in Latin America, during the International AIDS 2019 Conference in Mexico City to improve the visibility and promote the intercultural approach in the public health response to HIV towards elimination of HIV as a public health problem. The intercultural approach in the HIV response has been fully integrated in the PAHO methodological approach for HIV programme reviews; and PAHO started supporting the implementation of knowledge dialogues on HIV/STIs in few Latin American countries with plans to expand in 2020.

- ii. The theme of the 2020 PFII session is “Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16”. Please include information on any position paper, report or other activities and programmes that are of relevance to this theme
  
- iii. 2020 will be Beijing + 25. Please provide information on any publication, report or other background note etc. related to indigenous women? Please also provide links to any relevant sources.

In 2020, PAHO/WHO will be elaborating a report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Policy and its Plan of Action (2015-2019). This is in line with Beijing objectives on women rights. From a health perspective, PAHO’s approach focuses on gender equality, paying special attention to unequal relations between men and women, recognizing the specific situations indigenous women live in. A very important component of this work is data collection and health information disaggregated by sex and ethnic origin. PAHO/WHO is also contributing to the inter-agency global initiatives on Beijing + 25.

- iv. Please provide information on any methodology, tool or other steps taken to assess the implementation of Permanent Forum recommendations.

PAHO/WHO has worked with different tools and methodologies to address some of the recommendations made by the Forum. For instance, in the field of maternal health, PAHO/WHO has worked with a tool promoting culturally safe birth for indigenous women. This has been done in coordination with other PAHO existing mechanisms and tools to address maternal health. For instance, intercultural dialogues, as part of an integrated approach, have been key to address maternal health concerns from an indigenous perspective with health care personnel. PAHO/WHO is currently finalizing a methodology to conduct intercultural dialogues. Intercultural dialogues are crucial to promote actions addressing the health concerns of indigenous peoples and strengthening intercultural health models.

PAHO/WHO is strengthening its collaboration with indigenous organizations in the Region, through PAHO country offices. The process to develop the Strategy and Action Plan was a very participatory one, both at regional and country levels with different organizations, including indigenous organizations.

### **B. System Wide Action Plan to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

#### **Executive summary:**

Please provide an overview of actions taken to implement the System-Wide Action Plan on the Rights of Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This summary will form the basis of the compilation report of UN activities to implement the SWAP and the Declaration. [Word limit: 600]

PAHO/WHO conducted several activities to implement the SWAP to achieve the ends of the UNDRIP, as summarized below.

The approval of the first Policy on Ethnicity and Health by PAHO Member States during the 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference is a critical contribution for achieving the ends of the UNDRIP. This Policy constitutes a framework for Member States when addressing the health of indigenous peoples and incorporates five lines of action: 1) production of evidence; 2) promotion of policy action; 3) social participation and strategic partnerships; 4) recognition of ancestral knowledge and traditional and complementary medicine; 5) capacity development at all levels. UNDRIP is referred to and highlighted in the Policy on Ethnicity and Health. It is also available on the Cultural Diversity and Health website and promoted via regional PAHO/WHO social media accounts on relevant advocacy days recognized by PAHO/WHO.

In 2019, the Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health, aligned with the UNDRIP, was approved by PAHO Member States. This is another critical contribution for achieving the ends of the UNDRIP in the Latin American region. The process of elaboration of the Strategy included a large process of consultation with indigenous peoples and other groups at country, sub-regional and regional levels.

Important work is being conducted by PAHO/WHO at country level on a variety of health topics related to the health of indigenous peoples ensuring their participation. These areas include maternal health, communicable diseases (TB, HIV, neglected diseases) and non-communicable diseases and disaster risk reduction. PAHO has provided technical cooperation in the review of laws and plans addressing the health of indigenous peoples with their participation. In the field of maternal health, for instance, knowledge dialogues between indigenous peoples and health personnel have been conducted in several countries of the region to address maternal health priorities.

In 2019, the network integrating indigenous knowledge and disasters risk reduction management was launched. This network is composed by indigenous leaders and disaster risk management.

The Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health builds upon the global commitment to sustainable development made in the 2030 Agenda, to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first. It is particularly relevant to highlight the regional commitments reflected in the PAHO's Strategy for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage, and the Plan of Action on Health in All Policies. These instruments are in line with Goal 3, ensuring healthy lives for all at all ages, and make universal health coverage a central issue and an essential dimension in achieving this goal, based on the principles of equity, equality, and nondiscrimination.

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PAHO/WHO has virtual and in-person courses on cultural diversity and health. An ethnic approach to health can be found at: <http://cursos.campusvirtualesp.org/course/view.php?id=39>. PAHO/WHO has also been prioritizing technical cooperation to build the capacity of health systems to address ethnicity in harmony with SDGs and international and regional human rights instruments.

The Virtual Health Library on Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine for the Americas, launched in 2018, seeks to bring together those responsible for public policies, academia, professional associations, health service providers and indigenous organizations with the common goal of collaboratively develop a virtual space which allows us to better comprehend the panorama of traditional and complementary medicine in the Region of the Americas.

Both the approval of the first Policy on Ethnicity and Health (2017) and the Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health (2019) are critical contributions for achieving the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

### **1. Raising awareness of the UN Declaration**

UNDRIP is referred to and highlighted in the Policy on Ethnicity and Health, approved by PAHO Member States in 2017. UNDRIP is also available on the Cultural Diversity and Health website. It is promoted via regional PAHO/WHO social media accounts on relevant advocacy days recognized by PAHO/WHO.

### **2. Supporting the implementation of the UN Declaration, particularly at the country level**

Please provide information on actions taken or planned by your agency, fund, programme, entity on the following:

Important work is being conducted by PAHO/WHO at country level on a variety of topics that relate to the health of indigenous peoples ensuring their participation and engagement. PAHO has provided technical cooperation in the review of laws and plans addressing the health of indigenous peoples. In the field of maternal health, knowledge dialogues between indigenous peoples and health personnel have been conducted in Argentina, Paraguay, Honduras, Guatemala, Peru and El Chaco Region, to address maternal health priorities. It is important to highlight activities conducted in these countries to promote culturally safe birth among indigenous women. See link (intercultural dialogues and maternal health in Amazonas, Peru): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=143&v=HrWWNrPjK4k&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=143&v=HrWWNrPjK4k&feature=emb_logo)

### **3. Supporting indigenous peoples' rights in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Both, the Policy on Ethnicity and Health (approved in 2017) and the Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health (approved in 2019), build upon the global commitment to sustainable development made in the 2030 Agenda, to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest

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behind first. It is particularly relevant to highlight the regional commitments reflected in the PAHO's Strategy for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage, and the Plan of Action on Health in All Policies. These instruments are in line with Goal 3, ensuring healthy lives for all at all ages, makes universal health coverage a central issue and an essential dimension in achieving this goal, based on the principles of equity, equality, and nondiscrimination.

The Policy on Ethnicity and Health, promoted by PAHO/WHO, includes ethnicity as one of its four cross cutting themes for work, aligned with important global commitments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This policy takes into account the need to work together and reorient health services with an intercultural approach in order to improve the health conditions of indigenous peoples and other ethnic groups that coexist in the Americas region, who present health results more unfavorable than the rest of the population.

The Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health includes as one of its five strategic lines of action the production, integrated management, and analysis of disaggregated health information. It also promotes data on the health of indigenous peoples, its determinants, taking a rights-based, intercultural and gender-focused approach to decision making on intersectoral public health policies. With the approval of the Strategy, the ministries of health from the Region have committed to report on the health situation of indigenous peoples and other groups and to improve their health situation.

#### **4. Mapping of existing standards and guidelines, capacities, training materials and resources for the effective implementation of the UNDRIP**

PAHO/WHO has virtual and in-person courses on cultural diversity and health. An ethnic approach to health can be found at: <http://cursos.campusvirtualesp.org/course/view.php?id=39>. PAHO/WHO has also been promoting national, sub-regional and regional technical meetings to promote intercultural approaches to health. During these technical meetings, PAHO/WHO has prioritized technical cooperation that will help Member States to build the capacity of health systems to address ethnicity in harmony with SDGs and international and regional human rights instruments.

The Virtual Health Library on Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine for the Americas, launched in 2018, seeks to facilitate the access to scientific and technical information as well as to bring together those responsible for public policies, regulation organisms, academia, professional associations, health service providers and indigenous organizations with the common goal of collaboratively develop a virtual space which allows us to better comprehend the panorama of traditional and complementary medicine in the Region.

#### **5. Developing the capacities of States, indigenous peoples, civil society and UN personnel**

The Policy on Ethnicity and Health, approved in 2017, constitutes a framework for PAHO Member States when addressing the health of indigenous peoples and other groups. This policy incorporates five lines of action: 1) production of evidence; 2) promotion of policy action; 3) social participation and strategic partnerships; 4) recognition of ancestral knowledge and traditional and

complementary medicine; 5) capacity development at all levels. The Policy states that efforts should be made to train institutional and community health workers as intercultural facilitators who can create the conditions for knowledge dialogue. Consideration should be given to comprehensive care that is coordinated with other sectors to produce timely, culturally appropriate, and non-discriminatory health care. Furthermore, the integration of intercultural approach should be promoted in the design of technical and professional health curricula. The policy also promotes the representation of indigenous peoples, as well as members of other groups, based on the respective national context, to guarantee culturally appropriate health care.

### **6. Advancing the participation of indigenous peoples at the UN**

PAHO/WHO has ensured the participation and engagement of indigenous peoples in the elaboration of the Policy on Ethnicity and Health, approved in 2017, as well as in the elaboration of the Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health, approved in 2019. Indigenous youth from the Latin American Region elaborated the Health Plan for Indigenous Youth in the Americas with the technical support from PAHO/WHO. This also translated in a very active and engaging process with indigenous youth from the Region.

PAHO/WHO has also been actively involved in the Regional Inter-agency Group for Indigenous Peoples (for Latin America), which is at present the only inter-agency group with a consultative group of indigenous peoples.