

A Perspective from the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America

# Indigenous Peoples and COVID-19: Challenges in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals



**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MAJOR GROUP  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



Indigenous Peoples and COVID-19: Challenges in Achieving the ODS A perspective from the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America.

Indigenous Peoples' Major Group for Sustainable Development - IPMG  
Centro para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas - CADPI

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# Executive Summary

This document is an initiative of the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group for Sustainable Development and the Centro para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CADPI)<sup>1</sup>. This document explores the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Latin America, from the perspective of the region's Indigenous Peoples.

There are currently 826 different Indigenous Peoples registered in Latin America, 100 of which are of a transboundary nature and approximately 200 of which are in voluntary isolation (IWGIA, 2017). These groups tend to live in areas with high demographic levels and poor access to health systems, which demonstrates the deficiencies in the actions of the States to achieve compliance with the SDGs, a situation that will be aggravated by the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recent years, the Latin American region has been exposed to socio-political changes that have weakened the exercise of rights and general wellbeing, where social mobilizations and interventionist policies have prevailed, resulting in a socio-political imbalance that has impacted the levels of response of States to the implementation of actions to achieve compliance with Agenda 2030, and where one of the most affected groups has been the Indigenous Peoples, since in the few official statistics that include them, inequality rates continue to be considerably high. Likewise, the States continue to replicate positions that do not include the vision of development of the Indigenous Peoples. This vision is based on the values of the culture of life, coexistence and complementarity between people and nature, with respect for traditions and ancestors, but with a view to the future. That can be the basis for an intercultural development, favorable for the revitalization of the whole of humanity. And the Indigenous Peoples consider of that this can be principles of great importance in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The advance of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Latin American region is increasingly latent, and we have seen in many cases that States have had disjointed and slow responses to contain this disease. Indigenous Peoples have identified at least four groups that are vulnerable to the disease: Indigenous Peoples in isolation, Indigenous populations living in urban centers, Indigenous cross-border populations, and Indigenous communities in rural areas; these groups have little or no access to health services and are subject to exposure to other endemic transmittable diseases.

As part of the actions of national and regional indigenous organizations, we have identified measures that the peoples themselves have taken to deal with the pandemic, such as: dissemination of information in indigenous languages, measures to protect communities based on ancestral knowledge, measures of isolation, measures of reciprocity and exchange, measures of advocacy at various levels, and measures for territorial and community monitoring.

Recommendations have also been defined that are valid throughout the region:

- Governments must define actions aimed at guaranteeing humanitarian, health and food aid to reach Indigenous Peoples' territories,
- It is essential to deepen the mechanisms for dialogue between Indigenous Peoples and cooperation actors and States,
- Activate international cooperation to strengthen the investment of culturally appropriate resources and actions in indigenous territories that focus on contributing to mitigating and addressing the effects of COVID-19 among Indigenous Peoples,

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1 Translation to English: Center for the Autonomy and Development of Indigenous People – CADPI.

- It is also vitally important that governments recognize and support the measures that Indigenous Peoples take to prevent the dissemination of COVID-19 in their own territories.
- Governments should ensure mechanisms for the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the different stages of emergency and subsequent stages that respond to the economic, cultural and social contexts of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America,
- It is necessary to respect the processes of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and to be clear that the use of virtual consultations is an affront to the effective exercise of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- It is also vitally important that governments recognize and support the measures that Indigenous Peoples take to prevent the dissemination of COVID-19 in their own territories.
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- It is necessary to respect the processes of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and to be clear that the use of virtual consultations is an affront to the effective exercise of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.



# Abbreviations Glossary

APIB	Articulation of Brazil's Indigenous Peoples
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
CICA	Indigenous Council of Central America
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
CMI	Collective of Indigenous Women's Organizations
COICA	Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin
CONAIE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador
CONFENAIE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
2019	
ECMIA	Indigenous Women's Continental Network
FIAY	Abya Yala Indigenous Forum
FILAC	Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and
the Caribbean	
IMF	International Monetary Fund
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ONIC	National Indigenous Organization of Colombia
UN	United Nations
GNP	Gross National Product
REPAM	Pan Amazonian Ecclesial Network
TMS	Territorial Monitoring System

# index

1.	Indigenous Peoples in Latin America: a brief look at socio-demographic data	7
2.	The Vision of Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America	7
3.	Implementation of the SDGs for Indigenous Peoples in Latin America	8
4.	Implications and challenges of COVID-19 for the well-being and sustainable development of Indigenous Peoples	9
5.	Impact, consequences and challenges of response measures on the well-being and sustainable development of Indigenous Peoples	11
6.	Indigenous peoples' efforts, actions and initiatives to address COVID-19	13
6.1	• Dissemination of information in Indigenous languages	13
6.2	• Protection measures based on ancestral knowledge	16
6.3	• Isolation Measures	17
6.4	• Reciprocity and exchange measures to complement needs	17
6.5	• National, regional and international advocacy measures	18
6.6	• Monitoring Measures	19
7.	Conclusions	19
8.	Recommendations	20
	Revised Documents	22

## 1. Indigenous Peoples in Latin America: a brief look at socio-demographic data

In Latin America, the Indigenous population exceeds 45 million people, just under 10 percent of the region's total population, making it the most densely populated Indigenous<sup>2</sup> area on the planet. There are 826 distinct Indigenous Peoples in the region, of which about 100 are of a transboundary nature, meaning that they reside in at least two countries in the region; and, there are approximately 200 peoples in voluntary isolation (IWGIA, 2017 cited in FILAC 2020). One of the characteristics of the Indigenous population is that it is constituted by a demographic structure with younger age groups than the national average and other non-indigenous populations, as well as higher fertility and infant mortality rates (CEPAL, 2019).

Indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and in initial contact, as well as those living in urban areas, are in a state of high vulnerability to diseases; the first two groups, because they have weak immune systems, and those in urban areas, tend to live in areas with high population levels and poor access to health systems. Also, as the Amazon Frontline Initiative (2020) has noted, Indigenous Peoples across borders are in a situation of special vulnerability, not only because they are exposed to situations of systematic neglect and state of indifference, but also by the lack of recognition and respect for their individual and collective rights by the States. These Peoples are usually found in areas with limited health infrastructure, poor food supply conditions, drinking water and biosecurity.

This situation is evident in a large number of countries in the region, and highlights not only the marked breaches in the implementation of the SDGs, but also the deficiencies in the actions of the States to achieve compliance with the SDGs, all of which will be aggravated by the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. The Vision of Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America

The vision of development of the Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean is a plural and multi-dimensional concept born from their own cosmovision. It is based on the values of the culture of life, coexistence and complementarity between people and nature, responding to the protection of the common good and life for the benefit of all communities and nations. This concept, which has particular definitions for each indigenous people, is characterized by a holistic and integrated approach; it seeks to build on the exercise of collective rights, security, greater control and self-government over lands, territories and resources. It is built on collective identity, tradition and respect for the ancestors, but with a vision for the future.

Although this vision refers to the spirituality that Indigenous Peoples continue to maintain, it also refers to the institutions that move productive life, economic exchange relationships, systems of social organization, structures and practices of governance, as well as the role of the authorities in their service to peoples and communities. This vision of development must be understood as an alternative proposal for social and environmental coexistence, which calls for dialogue to enforce their rights and promote a new model of intercultural development, advantageous for the revitalization of all humanity.

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2 IWGIA - EL MUNDO INDIGENA - 2017, pág. 23 [http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0761\\_EL\\_MUNDO\\_INDIGENA\\_2017-eb.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0761_EL_MUNDO_INDIGENA_2017-eb.pdf)



### 3. Implementation of the SDGs for Indigenous Peoples in Latin America.

Agenda 2030 has a clear relationship with the exercise of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. According to the United Nations (UN), 156 of the 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are closely related to human rights; and, 73 of these targets are significantly related to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Cultural Survival, 2019). Even so, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the challenges for the implementation of the SDGs expose the gaps of inequality and structural racism faced by Indigenous Peoples, and above all it has exposed the inability of the States to include these Peoples as agents of change and leadership of development processes within the framework of an intercultural model.

In recent years, mobilizations in the region have reflected the social discontent around the actions with which States have responded to the challenges of development and poverty reduction. The growing increase of non-progressive regimes with a high neo-liberal vision in the region (Ecuador, El Salvador, Uruguay, Guatemala, among others) marks a scheme where the vision of economic interests goes beyond the basic needs of the population, and in this context, the situation of inequality of Indigenous Peoples is substantially aggravated.

The discussion during 2019 about the implementation of Agenda 2030 led to a critical analysis of the actions of the countries, as expressed by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), who considers that the States should seek a strategy to cooperate on issues that go beyond national spaces, agree on new approaches to inequality, the environmental crisis, migration, the technological revolution and conflict reduction, all of which requires new forms of multilateral cooperation to strengthen a democracy that is compatible with Agenda 2030, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Already in 2019, Bárcena warned

that if there is no change in the development schemes in the Region, the goals of several SDGs will not be achieved (CLACSO, 2019).

Thus, there is a trend in the region where access to secondary education is not sufficient for all girls and boys to complete it in a timely manner by 2030, and a tendency to increase the prevalence of malnutrition. Recent economic and distributive performance is insufficient to eliminate extreme poverty: in the last 10 years, Latin America's GDP has grown at less than 2% per year (1.7%). The Gini coefficient, which measures income distribution, fell by 0.9% per year over a 10-year period. In the last three years, however, the rate of decline was only 0.6% per year (CLACSO, 2019).

In addition, in recent years there have been a number of socio-political changes in the region that have weakened the exercise of the specific rights of Indigenous Peoples and their general well-being. In countries such as Ecuador and Colombia, we observe that in 2019, economic policies have resulted in social upheavals and the consequent impact on the protection of individual and collective rights of citizens. In the case of Ecuador, it was observed that the new regime "was aligned with external interests. The agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed the conclusion of this alliance. The so-called "paquetazo" decreed on October 1st, an austerity package, is extremely violent for low-income families, which represent the vast majority of the Ecuadorian population (Santos, 2020). During this situation in Ecuador, different indigenous leaders were placed under arrest and their actions in defense of their rights and territories were criminalized, presenting a serious setback for the fulfillment of SDG 16, eliminating the possibility of concrete actions to ensure respect and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and access to justice.

In other countries in the region such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua, policies of interventionism and socio-political imbalance have been evident, which have resulted in impacts on the social equilibrium for months and years, having long-term impacts on the levels and responses of States in the implementation of actions to comply with Agenda



2030. Furthermore, in Bolivia, the elimination of the fundamental rights of the Indigenous Peoples under a system that highlights racist and discriminatory policies is in sight.

In general, it can be observed that the advances in the implementation of the SDGs in indigenous territories should be linked to issues related to cultural diversity, with technical advances in the mainstreaming of ethnic issues, the definition of actions that lead to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), as well as the identification and disaggregation of ethnic origin in the national census and statistical systems. The challenges in the real implementation of the same are numerous, since it is observed that there are limited public policies to prioritize indigenous issues in the national agendas; FPIC, although it is in many countries as a defined norm, its implementation and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples is usually diluted by the imposition of extractive industries, and although some countries have included the ethnic variable in their census, others have not, therefore policies are defined that are not based on real evidence on the needs of Indigenous Peoples (Correa, 2019).

Before the pandemic, ECLAC predicted that the region would grow by 1.3 percent in 2020. However, given the current crisis, new projections have been made and a drop of at least 1.8 percent

of GDP is predicted. Although it is not ruled out that it will lead to contractions of between 3 and 4 percent (CLACSO, 2020). And, in this context, the Indigenous Peoples are facing a situation of greater lack of protection in relation to the non-indigenous population in the region.

## 4. Implications and challenges of COVID-19 for the well-being and sustainable development of Indigenous Peoples

According to ECLAC (2020), the current crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic may deepen the inequalities and social and labor exclusion suffered by Indigenous Peoples, a situation that is particularly serious in the case of women. One of the major problems in this pandemic has been access to water, sanitation, health and housing systems (and the resulting overcrowding), as well as inequality in health conditions, all of which can translate into higher rates of COVID-19 infections and mortality among rural populations, marginal urban populations, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants.



This is evident in the data presented below. In the latest data collected by FILAC<sup>3</sup>, the number of cases has increased substantially compared to the cases registered at the beginning of May 2020. This highlights the importance of generating information disaggregated by ethnicity on the situation in order to provide a timely and culturally appropriate response in each case. Most of the information currently available on cases of infection among Indigenous Peoples comes directly from indigenous organizations. In countries like Mexico and Brazil, the government is providing disaggregated information, but the same indigenous organizations consider that the data are not real and are far from the true number of infections. Cases are gradually becoming known that COVID-19 is affecting communities. In the data presented by COICA-REPAM at the end of May, there are 504 deaths and 2,278 infections in Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon basin (Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Guyana, French Guyana and Suriname) (Europa Press, 2020).

According to information as of May 25, 2020, Brazil is one of the countries in the region with the highest prevalence of the disease, and it is estimated that the mortality rate of Indigenous Peoples from COVID-19 is double that of the rest of the Brazilian population; the Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health has reported 695 cases of coronavirus and 34 deaths. But it must be stressed that the Secretariat only monitors a small group of people living in traditional villages and registered in local clinics, and not the indigenous population living in urban areas. This is why there is a clear difference with the data presented by the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), which has recorded more than 980 confirmed cases and at least 125 deaths, suggesting a mortality rate of 12.6 percent, compared to the national rate of 6.4 percent. More than 60 indigenous communities had confirmed cases of COVID-19 by that date, many in the Amazon area where people can only reach hospitals by boat or plane. (CNN, 2020).

In Colombia, by May 11, 2020, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) reported the existence of 142 indigenous people infected, of which 123 were from the Amazon region (Salazar, 2020). In Ecuador, the Siekopai

People, a cross-border nationality between Ecuador and Peru, with a population of only 744 people, are facing a serious situation as since late March several people in the community developed symptoms associated with COVID-19, with two deaths between April 14 and 21. Due to the slow response of the public health authorities, the nationality obtained the materials for the rapid tests which yielded 14 positives out of 44 tests done. However, health authorities still do not have a healthcare plan for the community. Likewise, in Venezuela, the Southern Diversity Studies Network points out the extreme risk that hangs over the Yanomami, Jodi and Uwottüja/Piaroa peoples in voluntary isolation or initial contact living in the Amazon by virtue of the presence of garimpeiros (miners) in their habitat (FILAC & FIAY, 2020).

Although Indigenous Peoples have defined actions in response to COVID-19, the number of cases in communities has increased significantly, which is clearly associated with a lack of direct and timely action by States specifically in Indigenous territories. Some indigenous organizations in the region have shown that this is a time when it is important to measure the risks of the communities, and to be able to establish an early warning system and prevent the further spread of the disease.

In terms of health, different studies show that there is a greater incidence of diseases that are tracers of inequity such as tuberculosis, higher maternal and infant mortality, sexual abuse resulting from structural violence, unwanted pregnancies, chronic diseases resulting from environmental pollution and the extractive industries; and, among indigenous youth, there are mental health problems. The structural discrimination that affects Indigenous Peoples, together with the impoverishment derived from the systematic dispossession of their territories and the loss of traditional ways of life, in addition to the obstacles to political participation and persistent racism, have a strong negative impact on the health of Indigenous Peoples and individuals (CEPAL, 2020).

3 Information obtained during the meeting of the Regional Indigenous Platform in relation to COVID-19 on May 28, 2020.

## 5. Impact, consequences and challenges of response measures on the well-being and sustainable development of Indigenous Peoples

As the pandemic advances towards the Region, the Indigenous Peoples identified at least four groups with greater vulnerabilities, these being a) the 200 Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation, mainly in the Amazon Basin, because their immune systems are weak against external pathogens; b) indigenous populations living in urban centers, mostly located in marginal neighborhoods, without access to basic water or sanitation services; (c) Indigenous populations living across borders, numbering around 100 nationalities, who are temporary workers, who intend to return to their communities and territories of origin, and who do not have health protocols for quarantine and/or protection in their mobility; and, (d) Indigenous communities in rural areas, without access to basic health services, and with growing pathologies of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and endemic transmittable diseases<sup>4</sup>.

In light of the situation, the Indigenous Peoples strengthened their institutionality, social structure and governance; and it is from this territorial community organization that they currently are facing the threat, impact and consequences of the COVID-19. However, it should be noted that external factors, which have contributed to historical exclusion, discrimination and inequality, not only persisted but deepened. One study reveals that despite the fact that racism has always existed, the situation of crisis or emergency lends itself to abuse and arbitrariness, whether

by security forces, officials from various agencies, health centers or economic agents<sup>5</sup>.

The measures have reflected many expressions of structural racism. These include the difficulty of travelling many hours to a hospital to receive measured care, and the impossibility for indigenous children to receive remote education due to lack of access to connectivity. In the communities of El Dorado, Brazil, the presence of COVID-19 increased hate speech against Indigenous Peoples, accusing them of being the cause of the spread of the disease<sup>6</sup>; in Colombia, the racist expressions of an official referring in pejorative terms to the Indigenous Peoples of Cauca, on the occasion of a request for funding for a contingency plan in indigenous communities in the Department of Cauca<sup>7</sup>, were made viral; likewise, the expressions between a radio broadcaster and an alleged Indigenous leader about the purchase of a Wayuu girl as a sex slave<sup>8</sup>. In Mexico, on April 6, Indigenous People from Chiapas filed an appeal for protection so that information in their native languages could be disseminated through all conventional and digital media.

José Francisco Calí Tzay, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, warned that states of emergency exacerbate the marginalization of indigenous communities and, in the most extreme situations, give rise to the militarization of their territories and other violations of their rights. He added that in the context of the advance of the coronavirus, Indigenous Peoples are denied freedom of expression and association, while companies continue to invade and destroy their territories and resources<sup>9</sup>. It has been documented that the environmental problems linked to illegal mining, deforestation and attacks on oil pipelines continue, and in some areas have even intensified<sup>10</sup>.

4 Information obtained during the first meeting of the Regional Indigenous Platform in relation to COVID-19

5 Valverde, S. mentioned by Alvarado. Telam, 75 a;os,28/05/2020

6 News Source: Valéria Araújo - Golden News <https://www.douradosagora.com.br/m/noticias/dourados/dourados-pan-demia-desencadeia-onda-de-odio-contra-indios-na-internet>

7 <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/indigenas-colombianos-denuncian-racismo-20200521-0019.html>

8 <https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2020/05/25/indignacion-en-colombia-un-locutor-de-radio-y-un-supuesto-lid-er-indigena-bromearon-sobre-la-compra-de-una-nina-aborigen-como-esclava-sexual/>

9 [https://news.un.org/es/story/2020/05/1474532?fbclid=IwAR2mAQAeqA2FNxP5FBTxlGz-bbYbN6pIP3Oeojp-v15q9URo-zoNeJe\\_Iv6A](https://news.un.org/es/story/2020/05/1474532?fbclid=IwAR2mAQAeqA2FNxP5FBTxlGz-bbYbN6pIP3Oeojp-v15q9URo-zoNeJe_Iv6A)

10 Fundacion Ideas para la Paz, en <https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-05-25/la-pandemia-no-frena-el-asesinato-de-lid->



In Bolivia, the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon in the north of La Paz, Beni and Pando, including the Tacanas and Lecos, denounce that, while the sanitary quarantine has paralyzed the country, paradoxically the extractive activities, consisting of the exploitation of gold, do not stop. In the case of Raposa Serra do Sol in Brazil, historical land conflicts have been aggravated by the increase in mining invaders, as pointed out by Ana Carolina Bragança, coordinator of Força-Tarefa Amazônia<sup>11</sup>. The Wiwa indigenous community of Arimaka, Sejamake, located in the village of La Punta de los Remedios, La Guajira department, reported that illegal miners continue to enter their territory, despite the health emergency<sup>12</sup>.

In the Amazon region of Ecuador-Peru, as well as in Venezuela and French Guiana, many cases have been detected of miners and loggers who have not complied with any of the voluntary isolation measures that the governments have decreed. Particularly serious is the situation of indigenous communities in the Amazon in Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil, which have problems with the lack of precise delimitation of their territories, because taking advantage of the pandemic, miners and loggers with armed groups enter their lands and seek to expel the Indigenous Peoples. This used to happen, but now, the communities cannot even try to request the intervention of the police or other State authorities to protect them.

The Waorani people, in Ecuador, have detected since mid-March 2020, the construction of a new road that crosses primary forest and approaches the Yasuni Intangible Zone, a reserve created to protect the territory of the Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation (Tagaeri, Taromenane), who are their relatives<sup>13</sup>.

In some cases, the dynamics of violence and armed confrontation have accelerated. In the municipality of Alto Baudó in Colombia, armed groups that make their living from drug trafficking are waging a war to death for this strategic territory. The Secretary of the Interior of Chocó estimates that some 1,500 indigenous people have been forced to move to a nearby village<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, the killing of indigenous leaders continues. On May 28, the spiritual leader Pedro Angel Maria Trochez and his partner Maria Nelly Guetia Dagua were murdered in the Andes of Corinto<sup>15</sup>.

The right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent has also been affected. In Colombia, by means of the external circular CIR2020-29-DMI-1000 of March 27 (revoked on April 22), the Ministry of the Interior prescribed that the actions and activities of the FPIC processes should be suspended for the duration of the obligatory preventive isolation. Likewise, it recommended, promoted and allowed the use of technological tools and virtual channels to advance the FPIC processes in a country where there is no connectivity in almost 50 percent of the national territory<sup>16</sup>.

Containment and quarantine measures have also led to socio-economic effects. In the Amazonian border communities between Peru and Ecuador, this is to the extent that they can no longer sell their products, they have serious shortages, not so much of food (because they produce fruit and other products) but of other basic goods such as medicines, cleaning supplies, etc. In the cross-border region between Colombia, Peru and Brazil, whose main activity is tourism and therefore no longer has any income, they expect to experience a severe food deficit in the coming months, since they will no longer have seasonal crops or any

eres-sociales-en-colombia.html?fbclid=IwAR0auKIwD\_EltCvLv1kZ6irYbztMvzqhzifwxzXeQL03TwPwYK4ZL11repw

11 <http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/599306-dois-mil-garimpeiros-buscam-ouro-em-raposa-serra-do-sol?fbclid=IwAR1N-m9o50e-l8y8YhPCULoo5jtB-kbFxn5WkNXXPdIE7f8pNsnV9XiIz6d8>

12 Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/ Programa por la Paz (Cinep), la Organización Wiwa Yugumaiun Bunkunarua, Tayrona, Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (Onic) y la Corporación Colectivos de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo Cajar.

13 [https://maaproject.org/2020/itt/?fbclid=IwAR0GOaOSWOTMXdWyU\\_lwWMe0JTdi-uQH97XupXkmdul59Vp2Me5eBJL-aOww](https://maaproject.org/2020/itt/?fbclid=IwAR0GOaOSWOTMXdWyU_lwWMe0JTdi-uQH97XupXkmdul59Vp2Me5eBJL-aOww)

14 [https://choco7dias.com/alto-baudó-es-un-campo-de-batalla-entre-el-eln-y-el-clan-del-golfo/?fbclid=IwAR192xT\\_Mu8Evjp-fX5DEYnHh5WESkTe0VQqbukSqAmebmcYOz0WHfRGMsY](https://choco7dias.com/alto-baudó-es-un-campo-de-batalla-entre-el-eln-y-el-clan-del-golfo/?fbclid=IwAR192xT_Mu8Evjp-fX5DEYnHh5WESkTe0VQqbukSqAmebmcYOz0WHfRGMsY)

15 [https://cabildocorinto.org/asesinan-a-un-sabedor-espiritual-y-a-su-companera-en-el-territorio-de-corinto/?fbclid=IwAR3FY-Wqjy2dXugREi0YoU0mB5Wbw3ui8B7old1GdYiYtiv\\_t3dj51nH7kUU](https://cabildocorinto.org/asesinan-a-un-sabedor-espiritual-y-a-su-companera-en-el-territorio-de-corinto/?fbclid=IwAR3FY-Wqjy2dXugREi0YoU0mB5Wbw3ui8B7old1GdYiYtiv_t3dj51nH7kUU)

16 <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/medio-ambiente/nuevas-modalidades-de-consulta-previa-un-retroceso-en-el-territorio-columna-920094?fbclid=IwAR1yhIKxLXN-zrNhMWBj4A6EcStzFJMXL-qcs78sw3t1NbhUg7aqBlRNQ0s>

other source of income. In Guatemala, several indigenous communities have reported that they have been arrested, especially women, when trying to sell their vegetables and there have even been confrontations in the markets with the authorities who prevent them from selling their products. Additionally, it is reported that food aid planned by the governments is not reaching all the communities in Colombia, El Salvador, the Amazon region and Guatemala.

Another effect has been the increase in cases of violence against indigenous women. Belegui Lopez Blas, in charge of the China Yodo women's shelter in Mexico, said that "not even the quarantine could stop the violence against women" and stated that it grew due to the confinement<sup>17</sup>. The Network of Indigenous Women Lawyers in Mexico said that, in times of pandemic, institutions in charge of guaranteeing justice, closed or there was a lag in attention (as in the prosecutor's offices), because the staff complied with the measure of isolation. In addition, the budget of the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples has been cut by 75 percent, which affects the houses of indigenous women<sup>18</sup>.

The cultural and spiritual effects have also impacted Indigenous Peoples. The protocol for immediate burial violates the worldview and cases have been seen in Miskitus communities, where they have refused to apply it. In the Wayuu people "The ritual of wakes and burials is very sacred ... the dream of all Wayuu is that their mortal remains rest in provisional cemeteries, which deserve respect even from the traditional owners of the territory where the provisional cemetery is located. This is the first burial. During the development of the second burial, the bones are taken definitively to ancestral cemeteries in the Upper Guajira. In both ceremonies, the bonds of cohesion of the maternal family (Apüshi)<sup>19</sup> are reinforced. The indigenous youth network has drawn attention to the mental health problems that are caused by the measures.

## 6. Indigenous peoples' efforts, actions and initiatives to address COVID-19

Indigenous Peoples in the Latin American region have been seeking action to contain the COVID-19 pandemic outside their lands and territories, in response to the slow actions that most States have defined both nationally and especially in areas far from urban centers. We can see that Indigenous Peoples in the region have so far taken five different measures to raise awareness of the situation and create protective measures in their territories, namely: dissemination of information in indigenous languages, multicultural protection measures, isolation measures, actions for food security, and monitoring and gathering information on the situation of the pandemic in their territories.

### 6.1. Dissemination of information in Indigenous languages

One of the first actions taken by Indigenous Peoples in Latin America in response to COVID-19 was the dissemination of information about the disease, prevention methods and ways of contamination in their different languages, both in urban and rural areas. The use of technology has played a fundamental role in the dissemination of information, through social networks, community radio, written media, audios, brochures, illustrations, talks by community leaders, and the holding of virtual seminars, not only to disseminate information but also to seek collective solutions.

The Indigenous Peoples themselves have assumed the commitment of their own protection, showing the collective capacity of self-management, through solutions that combine ancestral knowledge as a response to a new threat that compromises their survival as Peoples. Table 1 shows a summary of some of the media that the different Indigenous Peoples have used for prevention from their cosmovision.

17 <https://www.jornada.com.mx/ultimas/estados/2020/05/29/aumentan-llamadas-a-caami-en-juchitan-por-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-4905.html?fbclid=IwAR3w0be2Ullun-K-p7qMktqu7pjjRkuvhQIC6IpzyJxhJnkA0jCNU0HSaGs>

18 <https://www.contralinea.com.mx/archivo-revista/2020/05/28/mujeres-indigenas-sin-acceso-a-justicia-y-desproteccion-en-pandemia/?fbclid=IwAR1CqVCfG5NbIo-65gRf5e1ENmbzxzbPuYIxSeii1YdvCBPCfIkIFvJD7SU>

19 <https://www.las2orillas.co/tres-mujeres-wayuu-victimas-de-falsos-positivos-de-covid-19/>

Medio de Difusion	Pais	Mensaje	Idiomas
<b>Radio station Loudspeakers to disseminate information to the population of each district in Peru for the identification of the different symptoms of the COVID-19 disease</b>	Perú	identification of the different symptoms of the COVID-19 disease.	<a href="https://youtu.be/Pvtgww1xRn0">https://youtu.be/Pvtgww1xRn0</a>
<b>Website that includes audiovisual materials that explain in Spanish, Aymara and Quechua</b>	Bolivia <sup>19</sup>	Bolivia Information about the disease and ways to avoid contagion.  “Stay Home” Campaing	Aimara, quechua, mojeño, guaraní, ayoreo, yuqui, sirionó, esse-ejja y t’si-mane.
	Colombia <sup>20</sup>	Recommendations for the prevention, containment and mitigation of COVID-19	Uitoto, Iku o Arhuaca, Sikuani, Nasayawe, Tikua-na, Inga, Ikun, Wayuunai-ki, Cubeo y Bora, totalizando 10 idiomas nativos
<b>Community radio stations</b>	México <sup>21</sup>	The importance of staying home.  Recommendations on cleaning houses and hands.	Tu un Savi (mixteco del oeste de la costa), Mex-ikatlahtolli (náhuatl del centro alto), Hñähñu (otomí), Jñatjo (mazahua), Didza Xidza (zapoteco del Rincón de la Sierra Juárez, Oaxaca), Yokot’an (chontal de Tabasco), Maayat’aan (maya), Yoremnokki (mayo) y Ayuujk (mixe).

<sup>20</sup> Gina Baldivieso / Efe

<sup>21</sup> Comunicado de prensa >>2020>>103 Comisión Interamericana de Desarrollo Humano (CIDH). La CIDH alerta sobre la especial vulnerabilidad de los PI frente a la pandemia de COVID-19 y llama a los Estados a tomar medidas específicas y acordes a su cultura y respeto a sus territorios. Fecha: 06/05/2020

<sup>22</sup> [https://verne.elpais.com/verne/2020/04/22/mexico/1587592564\\_466955.html](https://verne.elpais.com/verne/2020/04/22/mexico/1587592564_466955.html)

<sup>23</sup> <https://digitalpolicylaw.com/cirt-lanza-campana-informativa-en-lenguas-indigenas-sobre-covid-19/>



<b>Medio de Difusion</b>	<b>Pais</b>	<b>Mensaje</b>	<b>Idiomas</b>
<b>Information campaign in indigenous languages about COVID-19 web portal and through the Indigenous Cultural Radio Broadcasting System</b>	México <sup>22</sup>	Preventing Message	In Chihuahua, the authorities launched a preventive dissemination campaign for the Coronavirus, in native languages, to the Tarahumara municipalities and indigenous settlements in the state, and messages were translated into Rarámuri, Mazahua and Odami languages.
<b>Radio, TV</b>	Guatemala <sup>23</sup>	Translation of decrees 5-2020 and 6-2020 Information about the disease	22 Mayan languages
<b>Audios and infographics on COVID-19 in six indigenous languages</b>	Ecuador <sup>24</sup>	Symptoms, hygiene measures	Kichwa, Shuar, Wao Tededo, Aí'Kofan, Siona y Siekopai.
<b>Flyers and videos in native languages</b>	Argentina <sup>25</sup>	Preventive measures on the virus	Guaraní, Günun a Ya-jÜch (que se habla en las provincias de Chubut, Neuquén, Buenos Aires y Caba), Mapuche, Quechua y Toba-Quom
<b>Public announcement system Information is shared with the indigenous people in the villages via WhatsApp and also by radio.</b>	Brasil <sup>26</sup>	“no one could go outside, this disease is much more dangerous for us.”	La Asociación Wakoborun de Mujeres Munduruku tradujo informativos de prevención a su lengua nativa.
<b>Wangki Mairin Indigenous Broadcaster -----  Television Channel 22 - Voice of Autonomy Audio, Video and Public Address System</b>	Nicaragua <sup>27</sup>	“no one could go outside, this disease is much more dangerous for us.” Protecting communities from COVID-19  Educational message on COVID-19 prevention and symptoms.	Miskitu   Spanish and Miskitu.

Medio de Difusion	País	Mensaje	Idiomas
<b>Educational campaigns in native languages</b>	Paraguay <sup>28</sup>	Educational messages on COVID-19 symptoms	Ishir Ybytosó(audios) Enxet, Qom, Nivaclé, Guaraní Occidental, Pai Tavytera, Aché
<b>Brochure , audio, text and video</b>	Venezuela <sup>29</sup>	Health communication	Warao

## 6.2. Protection measures based on ancestral knowledge

Indigenous Peoples are using protective measures to mitigate the negative effects of the spread of COVID-19, through the use of ancestral knowledge. Some examples are given below: in Panama, the Guna Yala people are making “a grandfather’s drink” to help those who are infected, and to strengthen the immune system; in Brazil, the Tikuna Indigenous People have resorted to their traditional remedy for respiratory diseases: inhaling smoke from medicinal plants and burning beehives. They have also created an ointment that they smear over their bodies before leaving home, if they need to perform any essential activity. And, in the absence of cloth masks, they make them out of coconut shells to create physical barriers. Indigenous women and artisans in several countries in the region have redirected their work towards the production of masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In Paraguay, the PuntoFarma chain of drugstores buys the masks that are produced by the women of the Yalve Sanga de Boquerón indigenous community as a way of contributing to their economic sustainability during the pandemic. In Mexico and Peru, indigenous women are producing masks using natural elements such as palm leaves (CHIRAPAQ & ECMIA, 2020).

Ceremonies are also being held to manage the natural and spiritual forces of the territories. Innovations have been created such as in the Chiloé Archipelago where community members have produced their own alcohol from plants that they have historically used to purify and cleanse the body, as well as burning herbs and incense to cleanse the air in homes. For indigenous peoples, managing the pandemic through spirituality is expressed as the search for the protection of healthy, balanced and beneficial bodies that sustain safe and healthy communities.

Asimismo, se están realizando ceremonias para gestionar las fuerzas naturales y espirituales de los territorios. Se han creado innovaciones como en el archipiélago de Chiloé<sup>30</sup> en donde los comunitarios han elaborado su propio alcohol a base de plantas que históricamente han utilizado para purificar y limpiar el cuerpo, así como la quema de hierbas y sahumerios para la limpieza del aire en los hogares. Para los pueblos indígenas, la gestión de la pandemia a través de la espiritualidad se expresa como la búsqueda de la protección de cuerpos sanos, equilibrados y benéficos que sustentan comunidades seguras y sanas.

24 <http://elperiodico.com.gt/nacion/2020/05/23/pueblos-indigenas-los-mas-vulnerables-ante-el-covid-19/>

25 <http://signisalc.org/noticias/amazonia/pueblos-indigenas/23-04-2020/la-comunicacion-indigena-durante-el-coronavirus>

26 <http://signisalc.org/noticias/amazonia/pueblos-indigenas/23-04-2020/la-comunicacion-indigena-durante-el-coronavirus>

27 ([www.cui.edu.ar](http://www.cui.edu.ar))

28 <https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020-04-10/los-pueblos-indigenas-de-brasil-se-enfrentan-a-la-pandemia-con-miedo-y-reglas-propias.html>

29 <http://www.stp.gov.py/v1/facilitan-materiales-en-diferentes-lenguas-nativas-para-la-prevencion-del-covid-19/>

30 Webinar, Red Iberoamericana de expertos de Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas “Reencuentro con Medicina Natural”. Testimonio de Gérak Millalonca indígena colombiano del Archipiélago Chiloé

### 6.3. Medidas de Aislamiento

In several cases in the region we encountered indigenous communities and territories that sought to define measures of isolation before governments defined actions. The self-determination and control of territories has been the spearhead for the management of health and protection of communities in the context of the COVID-19.

For example, in Brazil the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) recommended avoiding contact with non-natives, as well as suspending entry to and exit from the territory and restricting activities within the community. In Ecuador, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENAIE) gave each people the freedom to take the most appropriate measures within their territory. In Chile, the Mapuche people in Araucania decided to prevent the entry of tourists who took advantage of the prohibitions in the capital to go on vacation. In Mexico, in the Ayuuk, Mixe, area of the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca they have developed special measures with grandparents, who must remain in the houses. In the case of children, they cannot go out to play, they stay at home.

It is recognized in the area that "Our response is always communitarian. [We work] with the authority to make a list of the people who are most at risk. For example, grandparents who are alone (there are grandparents who are in the countryside alone, they do not live in the community), or children whose parents are isolated. We have a traditional network. When someone dies, one person brings you food, another, a pantry, another firewood... and that's the strategy we follow." (Yásnaya, 2020). Likewise, in other towns in Oaxaca such as: Herve el Agua, San Lorenzo and Capulálpam<sup>31</sup> (this last Magic Town) they no longer allow outsiders to enter the community. Because the older population is the most vulnerable to this virus, in these towns the elders are "very valuable, they are not only a source of wisdom, but also of governance" (Yásnaya, 2020).

At the national level in indigenous territories and communities, health protocols have been developed and implemented. Many communities have adopted their own health protocols, which range from social distancing, the use of traditional medicines to strengthen immunological systems, and activities that allow for community healing. For



31 <https://www.clacso.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Haro-2020-Dossier-Indigenas-mexicanos-frente-a-la-pan-demia-Covid19.pdf>



example, in El Salvador, some communities have defined health fences and sanitation campaigns as part of their protocols, as well as control of outsiders and relations within the community (Pérez, 2020).

#### **6.4. Reciprocity and exchange measures to complement needs**

The measures of reciprocity and exchange to complement needs is a primary action that is integrated as part of the community measures taken by the Indigenous Peoples in the face of the impact of the COVID-19, for example Indigenous Peoples in Oaxaca, who are fishermen, exchange their products through barter; even the Indigenous Peoples in Ecuador take leaves from a tree as a medicinal plant to the non-indigenous population to teach them that it can serve to cure them or to sanitize the environment. In Argentina, special care is taken towards the elderly and children by promoting a balanced, nutritious diet (CHIRAPAQ & ECMIA, 2020).

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), has expressed that the communities and territories have a quarantine before the health emergency that involves maintaining the forms of community exchange, barter, community fairs, keeping the prevention measures to supply their territories and maintaining equitable exchanges. This has been an effective mechanism for the communities and all their population to remain protected from their territories and ensure internal well-being and access to basic products for their food (CONAIE, 2020).

#### **6.5. National, regional and international advocacy measures**

Along with actions at the territorial level, Indigenous Peoples have carried out a systematic process of advocacy that has involved a series of declarations, communications to governments, proposals for contingency plans, and webinars, among other actions.

At the regional level, we have seen an active

use of social networks, as a space to initiate a collective approach of proposals. For example, Webinars have been a mechanism for education and information among Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as for the strengthening of indigenous institutions in the context of the pandemic. The Indigenous Youth Network of Latin America and the Caribbean, with the support of FILAC, has conducted a series of webinars that have served as collective learning for and from the different indigenous nationalities of the region. Some of these seminars have been: Contributions of the Indigenous Youth of Abya Yala against Coronavirus, COVID-19, the Dialogue with Indigenous Youth on Mental Health in times of pandemic; and Indigenous Youth of Abya Yala testify their experiences during the pandemic in mental health care. The indigenous youth consider that psychological and mental care is important, given that during the pandemic there has been evidence of a disturbance in people's emotional well-being, affecting more the Indigenous People in urban and peri-urban areas who present symptoms of depression, stress, anxiety, insomnia, panic attacks, anger and extreme fear derived from the prolonged isolation, and also from the uncertainty experienced in rural areas. Rayanne Máximo Franca, a young indigenous from the Baré people in Brazil, stressed that "...care must be collective ... we cannot take care of anyone if we do not take care of everyone and of life as a whole, we are a community", emphasizing respect for ancestral knowledge and traditions and their inclusion in our daily lives, especially during this pandemic (FILAC, Indigenous Youth Network, FIAY, 2020).

Since the beginning of the pandemic, regional indigenous organizations have initiated a series of declarations and statements as forms of advocacy, calling on States, International Cooperation and other actors to anticipate the possible impacts on Indigenous Peoples and to define actions for their territories. Different organizations such as ONIC, CICA, CMI, FIAY, Continental Network of Indigenous Women's (ECMIA), CONAIE, COICA, have made statements that range from launching contingency plans for Indigenous Peoples, calls to maintain unity and reciprocity, calls for support from Cooperation and States for attention to indigenous territories, proposals for culturally

relevant actions in their territories, as well as the definition of protocols.

It should be mentioned that given the passivity of government action, some Indigenous Peoples have managed to raise funds as a way of looking beyond their territories and the region. Such is the case of COICA that has launched a campaign to raise at least three million dollars for emergencies and essential funds for the next two weeks. However, COICA's leadership warned that these funds are only an "absolute minimum to start operating" and that a lot more funds will be needed to respond to the pandemic in the region (NODAL, 2020).

Among the different advocacy measures, we find the Regional Indigenous Platform in relation to COVID-19 (PIR-COVID19), a space of collective construction where national and regional organizations of Latin America converge, which together with FILAC, defined on April 31, 2020. Among the 40 organizations that make up this forum, it was defined that its main and initial objectives will be to influence governments and international cooperation so that Indigenous Peoples will have a greater role in the Emergency Committees that are being formed in various countries and that more culturally relevant actions will be carried out; that good practices will be exchanged and initiatives that can be replicated in various territories will be made visible; that the situation of the pandemic will be systematically monitored and the implications of this emergency will be seen in the future. And, finally, they will present an agreed design of a COVID-19 mitigation project that contemplates immediate terms, as well as medium and long terms (FILAC, 2020).

## 6.6. Monitoring Measures

The regional indigenous platform is an experience that goes hand in hand with monitoring actions at the national and territorial level that indigenous organizations are carrying out. When analyzing the information generated by the States, the Indigenous Peoples are invisible, so these initiatives aim to have a monitoring system and indicators to make the impacts of the pandemic on Indigenous

Peoples visible. In order to go beyond just measuring infections, indigenous organizations want to define a risk identification scheme to continue promoting measures for the prevention of infections in communities and territories. As expressed by Wilson Herrera (2020), leader of the indigenous organization ONIC, more than 150 territorial control points have been established in indigenous territories in Colombia, and the information obtained from official data of the National Institute of Health, as well as the reports made by indigenous authorities from their territories, are being monitored. Since 2013, ONIC has been using the Territorial Monitoring System (TMS) tool, which was defined as a territorial self-diagnostic exercise and has been adapted to the current situation for the inclusion of indicators related to the pandemic. Based on this information, an analysis of risks and vulnerabilities, prevalence, incidence and lethality of the COVI-19 disease is carried out; valuable information for guiding decision-making based on the established classification and which is reported to the local indigenous authorities and health authorities. This information is updated every 15 days, and ONIC has public bulletins<sup>32</sup>.

Another monitoring experience in the region is the one defined under the alliance of COICA-REPAM, which together have defined under the framework of cooperation and collaboration a joint work for the periodical visibility of the particular situation of the Indigenous Peoples and communities in the Amazon before the situation of Pandemic. Presenting updated data on the incidence and prevalence of contagion in the Amazon region and contributing reliable data to the Regional Indigenous Peoples' Platform for Combating COVID-19.

Monitoring in the region has been an action that strengthens indigenous territorial governance and control, and provides data and information that can facilitate dialogue with government authorities in the search for actions and solutions in indigenous territories in the context of the pandemic.

32 <https://www.onic.org.co/boletines-osv/3853-boletin-023-sistema-de-monitoreo-territorial-smt-onic-informacion-para-proteger-la-vida-y-los-territorios> (ONIC, 2020)

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic comes at a time when society is facing major social, environmental and economic challenges, which in many cases aggravate situations that are already latent. In the Latin American region, the economic impacts of the current crisis are expected to have a strong impact on the poorest and most vulnerable populations. In this context, one of the unknowns that come to light in the current discussions are the consequences that this pandemic could have on the fulfilment of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The pre-pandemic analyses were not the most encouraging with regard to compliance with the SDGs, and it is believed that the pandemic could have repercussions in delaying compliance with these goals. In this circumstance, Indigenous Peoples continue to be in highly vulnerable situations, which are compounded by structural racism in Latin America, as well as a lack of access to basic services, especially related to access to water and coverage of the comprehensive health system in the areas where they live.

The situation of the Indigenous Peoples in the region shows the fragility in which they live, although measures of isolation and distancing help to reduce the rates of infection, the repercussions are serious in the indigenous territories and communities. Since they are left without the opportunity to mobilize in search of daily sustenance, especially for the high percentage of the population that depends on economic subsistence systems. In other cases, it has been seen that quarantines are accompanied by the militarization of cities and rural areas, comparable to situations of war, which could result in the weakening of traditional decision-making systems and the violation of the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples. These repercussions that cover different spheres of the life systems of Indigenous Peoples are having a greater impact on women, older people and Indigenous with disabilities.

Also, we have seen in the region that Indigenous Peoples have sought viable solutions to their contexts and realities, to address the COVID-19 pandemic, given that many States have had late

responses to define actions in indigenous territories. It shows that grassroots efforts have succeeded in responding to the urgency of information by avoiding a communication crisis with more harmful effects than those they are facing. Through the various measures that Indigenous Peoples have taken, collective rights have been exercised, strengthening organizational forms, culture and languages, based on ancestral knowledge, including their own health systems. Likewise, organizations in the region have begun to discuss measures for the next post-pandemic stages.

The challenges will continue to be enormous in the region in a post-pandemic period, as can be seen in the ECLAC data we are facing a context of crisis and economic paralysis where the 5.3% fall in GDP and the 3.4 percentage point increase in unemployment is projected to increase extreme poverty by 2.6 percentage points (15.9 million additional people) affecting a total of 83.4 million people (CELAC, 2020). The implications for the hope of achieving poverty eradication, as one of the unstable SDGs, and the impacts it will have on indigenous territories could be devastating.

Even so, the vision of the Indigenous Peoples in the region is that the crisis generates a new opportunity, because proposals for the construction of a new social model and alternative development have been presented, and it is of vital importance for cooperation actors and States to integrate Indigenous Peoples and their proposals as fundamental elements to confront the Coronavirus pandemic.



## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this context, the recommendations to which we adhere are in accordance with the recommendations and voices that Indigenous Peoples have raised throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, are:

- It is necessary that governments define actions focused on guaranteeing humanitarian, health and food aid to the territories of Indigenous Peoples,
- It is essential to deepen the mechanisms for dialogue between Indigenous Peoples and cooperation actors and States,
- Activate international cooperation to strengthen the investment of culturally appropriate resources and actions in indigenous territories that focus on contributing to mitigating and addressing the effects of COVID-19 among Indigenous Peoples,,
- It is also vitally important that governments recognize and support the measures that Indigenous Peoples take to prevent the dissemination of COVID-19 in their own territories.
- Governments should ensure mechanisms for the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the different stages of emergency and subsequent stages that respond to the economic, cultural and social contexts of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America,

- It is necessary to respect the processes of free, prior and informed consent and to be clear that the use of virtual consultations is an affront to the effective exercise of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.



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## **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MAJOR GROUP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



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