

“Working with people’s movements – notably members’ organizations of farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples and other social groups – is critical. FAO has found that collaborating with those most affected by, but more importantly most capable of directly confronting challenges to food and agriculture is fundamental. This publication by the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service successfully documents promising examples from FAO and other agencies and points to ways forward for the future within the UN system.”

Annika Söder
Special Adviser to the Director-General/Assistant Director-General
Office of United Nations Coordination and Millennium Development Goals follow-up
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

“The membership-based organizations representing smallholder farmers and other resource-poor rural producers at local, national and international levels are ... key strategic partners for institutions such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development that work to enable poor rural women and men to overcome poverty. We believe that empowering these organizations and building their capacity to serve their members better are essential for sustainable rural development and the eradication of poverty and hunger.”

Matthew Wyatt
Assistant President
External Affairs Department
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

“As this publication demonstrates, there is a continuing need for creating spaces for constructive dialogue and mutual cooperation, with the full participation of indigenous peoples in the decisions that affect them. This is essential not only in the context of UN activities but also at the local, national and regional levels. This publication showcases a number of initiatives to this end, which could be duplicated and further supported in order to ensure the full realization of indigenous peoples’ rights in the twenty first century.”

Prof. James Anaya
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of
the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) was established in 1975 to promote constructive relations between the United Nations and civil society, including through dynamic partnerships to foster greater coherence around cross-cutting and emerging issues on the UN’s agenda and by facilitating meaningful civil society engagement in UN processes.

Drawing on its inter-agency nature and UN system-wide perspective, NGLS provides strategic information, analysis and support to a wide range of constituencies, using its unique convening and networking capacity to strengthen multistakeholder dialogue and alliance-building on core UN issues.

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STRENGTHENING DIALOGUE

UN Experience with Small Farmer Organizations and Indigenous Peoples



Available online at: www.un-ngls.org/peoplemovements

STRENGTHENING DIALOGUE

UN Experience with Small Farmer Organizations & Indigenous Peoples

An NGLS publication by Nora McKeon and Carol Kalafatic

Strengthened dialogue: benefits and obstacles

Civil society interaction with the United Nations (UN) system has increased significantly over the past 15 years. So far, the majority of these relations have been with non-governmental organizations of various kinds, including humanitarian and development NGOs, advocacy groups and faith-based organizations.



As *Strengthening Dialogue* demonstrates, there is room to explore better interaction with some other sectors of civil society, especially small-scale farmers, rural women, indigenous peoples, slum dwellers and other constituencies who still have limited access to global decision-making forums. The UN needs the direct input of

these people's movements in order to ensure that the policies it adopts and the programmes it implements incorporate the insights and proposals of those they are intended to support. Engaging them is particularly relevant in a moment in which global challenges have emerged with force – climate change, energy, water, food – which cannot be addressed by Member State governments alone.

The result of over a year of participatory research, *Strengthening Dialogue* highlights some of the mutual benefits of a closer working relationship between the United Nations and people's movements by focusing on two case studies: small farmers and indigenous peoples. It also identifies obstacles which need to be addressed in order to make a qualitative shift from what is often mere consultation to truly meaningful engagement.



Learning from existing experiences



There are examples of global mechanisms for ongoing relations between UN entities and civil society where a very determined effort has been made to put people's movements in the forefront, such as the IFAD Farmers' Forum and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. *Strengthening Dialogue* examines

some of these mechanisms and identifies strong points that might be replicated elsewhere in the UN system. It also draws on valuable lessons from experience at the country level.

Principles and practices for strengthened dialogue

While fully recognizing the diversities that exist both among different people's movements and within the UN system, *Strengthening Dialogue* suggests a core set of principles and practices that could apply to UN interactions with people's movements generally and at all levels – from global to national. It also presents some initiatives that could be undertaken jointly in order to enhance engagement and proposes a number of ideas and strategic orientations on which to focus.

