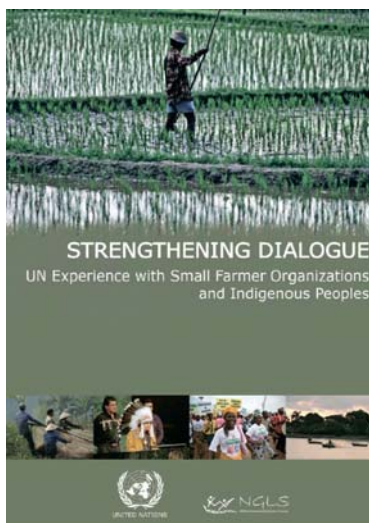


## Strengthening the engagement of the United Nations with people's movements is essential and mutually beneficial

**16 November 2009, New York** – Strengthening the United Nations' engagement with people's movements – notably members' organizations of farmers, fishers, slum dwellers as well as indigenous peoples – is crucial, urgent and feasible, according to a study released today by the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS).



The UN needs the direct input of people's movements – whose access to global decision-making forums is still limited – 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.

*Strengthening Dialogue: UN Experience with Small Farmer Organizations and Indigenous Peoples* suggests a core set of principles and practices, and some specific initiatives that could be undertaken in order to enhance this engagement. It highlights some of the potential benefits of closer engagement, examines the obstacles that need to be addressed, and notes the distinct challenges of cooperation at the country level.

The study focuses on two specific cases: small farmer organizations and indigenous peoples. It looks at concrete examples of interaction at both the global and country levels that can provide valuable lessons for strengthening future engagement.

The project adopted a participatory approach aimed at building dialogue among selected people's organizations and indigenous peoples, and UN system entities as an integral part of the inquiry. It draws from case studies as well as nearly one hundred interviews with representatives of UN entities, from operational officers to senior managers, and representatives of small farmers and indigenous peoples.

This publication aims to heighten awareness and increase debate, both within UN circles and, between the UN system and people's movements, about the principles and practices of meaningful engagement. It also encourages action on its recommendations.

The focus on small farmers and indigenous peoples is only illustrative. The investigation could – and should – be extended to other frequently under-represented groups such as slum dwellers, migrant workers and many others.

*Strengthening Dialogue* is an independent study commissioned by NGLS, with the support of the Ford Foundation, and authored by Nora McKeon and Carol Kalafatic.

**For more information on the report, please visit: [www.un-ngls.org/peoplemovements](http://www.un-ngls.org/peoplemovements)**

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*“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 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

## **ABOUT 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.