

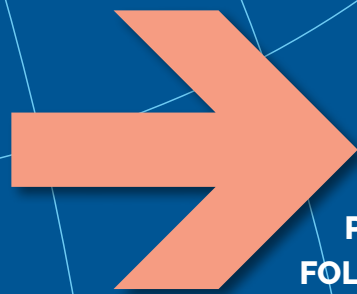


BETWEEN RESISTANCE AND ADAPTATION TO CHANGE

RESISTING, ADAPTING, PROPOSING:

How six indigenous communities from Latin America and Asia deal with threats to their territories and their lifestyles





**DISCOVER OUR
PARTNERS ON THE
FOLLOWING PAGE...**

➤ THIS STUDY WAS PRODUCED BY:

Jacqueline de Bourgoing, Paloma Cerdan, Joël Da Costa, Thai-Son Dao, Juliette Gallou, Vincent Garruchet, Aude Hadley, and Sara Lickel.

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> **TO OUR PARTNERS:** Caritas Bangladesh, CENDI, CIPCA, KMSS Loikaw, MASS, SAIPE. To the communities of Bajo Canampa, Chunia, Douweku, Kwaingan, Kuradiphasa, San José del Cavitu, Vi Klang Hi, and Vi O Lak.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Secours Catholique - Caritas France (SCCF) has undertaken work to observe the lifestyles of indigenous peoples and how they manage their territories from the angle of integral ecology as defined by Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Laudato Si*. At the same time, SCCF has turned its attention to the support provided by its partners working on the ground in Asia and Latin America.

The study presented here was conducted collaboratively in eight villages by three teams from the International Action and Advocacy Department of SCCF and six of its partners: Caritas Bangladesh, KMSS Loikaw in Myanmar, MASS in India, CENDI in Vietnam, SAIPE in Peru, and CIPCA in Bolivia.

➤ THIS STUDY IS COMPOSED OF THREE PARTS:

PART 1: INDIGENOUS LIFESTYLES FACED WITH A DOMINANT PREDATORY SYSTEM

The indigenous populations of the eight villages visited carry on a unique relationship with their territory. This special relationship sheds light on a variety of territorial management practices. Tensions—especially of an economic nature—are emerging and are pushing communities to adopt unsustainable practices. The socio-economic upheavals of recent decades have led to in-depth and rapid changes. The ensuing questions about identity (culture, tradition, lifestyle choices) have consequences not only on relationships within villages, but also on how territories are managed.

PART 2: HOW CAN WE SUPPORT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

The six partners from Asia and Latin America carry out work with distinctive features to support indigenous communities. Various principles must guide it: the partners carry out a holistic analysis beforehand, use a participatory approach, and adopt a position in which they act as an ally. The partners promote collective governance of common goods, and they seek ways to respond to economic emergencies all the while including the issue of sustainable territorial management. Their work in network form fosters the exchange of best practices. Finally, advocacy actions are developed in a participatory way, with multiple levels and scales that require coherency. These points of view and challenges provide opportunities for exploring ideas for work that SCCF and its partners can do.

PART 3: RECOMMENDATIONS BY SECOURS CATHOLIQUE - CARITAS FRANCE

While the villages face very different national and local situations, the political obstacles encountered by partners and communities are generally the same. The central government must respect indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and at the same time preserve the climate and biodiversity. It must also involve people in decision-making.

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INTRODUCTION

"If an indigenous person feels their territory faces a danger, they're capable of anything. There's a price to pay for our land. We'd protect it from death, like we would our mother. That's how the indigenous person feels about nature: the mountain and the forest give us everything. There's interdependence between nature and the indigenous person."

Romero, indigenous Awajún
from the Bajo Canampa community, Peru.

Indigenous peoples represent only 5% of the world's population but 15% of the number of people living in extreme poverty worldwide.¹ Secours Catholique - Caritas France (SCCF) has been working for many years with partners who work with indigenous peoples so that their rights are recognized. It was after a fruitful meeting with several partners from Asia and Latin America at the Pan-Amazonian Social Forum in Tarapoto, Peru, in 2017, that the idea arose of working together in the spirit of the *Laudato Si* encyclical.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

There is no globally accepted definition of the concept of indigenous or aboriginal peoples. However, a standard reference is the definition proposed by José Martínez Cobo, who was mandated by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1971 to carry out a study on the discrimination experienced by indigenous peoples. This study was the first step in a long path that led to the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. It gives the following definition:

"Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems."²

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1. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>
2. Cobo report, 1986-87. <https://cendoc.docip.org/collect/cendocdo/index/assoc/HASH01a2/55590d02.dir/Martinez-Cobo-a-1.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

Pope Francis's encyclical letter "*Laudato Si'* On Care for Our Common Home"³ (2015) is dedicated to environmental and social issues. It calls for a rethinking of the interactions among human beings, society, and the environment. For Pope Francis, "*We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental*" (139) because if "*the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all,*" (23), the impact of climate change affects the most vulnerable. On this basis, Pope Francis severely criticizes the Western model of life and the capitalist economic system, which he calls "*self-destructive.*" According to him, the modern age is characterized by "*an excessive anthropocentrism which today, under another guise, continues to stand in the way of shared understanding and of any effort to strengthen social bonds.*" (116).

For Pope Francis, integral ecology is the new paradigm of justice. It proposes an ecology that takes into account the social, economic, environmental, cultural and spiritual dimensions, because "*everything is interrelated.*" He thus calls for an "*ecological conversion*" to rethink the interactions between human beings, society, and the environment. He states that "*Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live.*" (139). It is essential, he says, to pay special attention to indigenous communities, who "*should be the principal dialogue partners*" because "*for them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values.*" (146).

THE INITIAL OBJECTIVE OF THE PRESENT STUDY WAS TO IDENTIFY INDIGENOUS PRACTICES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TERRITORIES.

In October 2018, the CLARA alliance⁴, of which SCCF is a member, published the report *Missing Pathways to 1.5°C*. This report takes a cross-cutting look at climate, biodiversity, and human rights and advocates a strengthening of the land rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. It should be noted that 40% of the world's remaining natural

land is located on indigenous territories.⁵ Securing land rights for indigenous peoples enables them to manage forest areas collectively and thus protect the CO₂ stocks contained there. Management by indigenous peoples would also help reduce deforestation—provided that the causes of deforestation (demands and progress of the agricultural front) are tackled at the same time. These recommendations are in line with findings by IPBES⁶, which indicate that degradation of land and marine environments is significantly less in areas managed or owned by indigenous peoples.⁷ It is therefore in light of *Laudato Si'* and in continuity with the CLARA report that SCCF wished to take a closer look at the interrelations between indigenous peoples and protection of the environment.

The initial objective of the present study was to identify indigenous practices for the conservation of natural resources and sustainable management of territories. The notion of sustainability in land management is analyzed from the angle of integral ecology. With respect to this concept, SCCF focused on how the social, environmental, spiritual, economic, and cultural dimensions are interrelated in the cosmovisions and land-management practices of indigenous peoples. The way in which these dimensions are taken into account in the partners' support practices was also analyzed.

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3. Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis "*Laudato Si' on Care for Our Common Home*", May 2015.
4. Climate, Land, Ambition, and Rights Alliance.
5. Kate Dooley, Doreen Strabinsky, CLARA, *Missing Pathways to 1.5°C*, October 2018.
6. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is the biodiversity equivalent of the IPCC.
7. https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-02/ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers_en.pdf



BOLIVIA

JULIETTE GALLOU / S.C.-C.F.

COSMOVISION

A cosmovision is the set of beliefs, values, and practices (social, cultural, religious and spiritual) that structure the identity of a people. These elements are found in International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 (Article 5) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Article 12).

Cosmovision can also be defined as follows: "The set of logical and symbolic relationships and structures of understanding, perception and feeling of self, the world and the cosmos. It is made up not only by forms of external behavior or by the all the traditions, but also by the thoughts that generate them and by conceptions of the causes of creation, order and relations between what exists." (Palencia, 1999: 41).

In Latin America, the term "cosmovision" has taken on strong political connotations: it challenges the colonialist, Western, and dominant vision and at the same time recalls that indigenous societies have had their own world view, history, beliefs, and culture from long before colonization. Today, this term is widely used by indigenous movements in Latin America and can be found in the justifications and demands for the recognition of the rights and specificities of indigenous peoples.

The term is thus closely linked to Latin American history; it is not used by our Asian partners or the communities they support. We have chosen to use it in the work that follows in order to encourage a cross-continental perspective, and to be able to use a term that encompasses particular world views and relationships. We recognize, however, that it is not part of the tools or work of our partners in Asia.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples face many challenges in managing their territory: exclusion, discrimination, poverty, demographic pressure, land fragmentation, climate change, and the need for cash. The villages studied were all exposed to external influences (economic, political and religious pressure), but in different time frames and under different circumstances. Promotion of the extractive model⁸ on their territory has caused great upheaval in these societies—culturally, socially, economically, and in terms of identity. By proposing solutions that are often unsuitable to the local situation, development policies have encouraged a transition from traditional subsistence practices toward often unsustainable commercial practices. During the field missions, two major issues observed were that villages lacked sustainable economic alternatives and were evolving in contact with the outside.

METHODOLOGY USED

This participatory study is the result of work carried out by three departments of the International Action and Advocacy Direction of SCCF (Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia Eastern Europe, International Advocacy) and six of its partners in Asia and Latin America:⁹ Caritas Bangladesh, CENDI (Vietnam), CIPCA (Bolivia), KMSS Loikaw (Myanmar), MASS (India), SAIPE (Peru). Based on the work of these organizations and on case studies, this report analyzes the territorial management of eight indigenous villages visited.¹⁰ The compared analyses from two continents has thus fueled the work of SCCF and its partners in their support for indigenous populations. It has also helped to develop policy recommendations based on realities on the ground.

The villages were selected by the SCCF partners, and field data collection was conducted jointly by them and SCCF over six field missions carried out between July and November 2019. The aim of these surveys was to test the following four hypotheses that allowed us to start up reflection and analysis in the field:

- Indigenous peoples' cosmovision allows for sustainable management of territories.
- The practices of indigenous peoples are consistent with this cosmovision.
- Sustainable management of territories is possible only if the State recognizes indigenous peoples' right to land.
- Support from the partners and SCCF fosters the respect and promotion of indigenous peoples' practices.

The field surveys were based on questionnaires and unfolded as follows: preparation day with partners; visit to village territories; participatory mapping (or presentation of the mapping when it already existed); assembly meeting with the communities; focus groups; individual interviews (community members and local authorities); final debriefing with the partner. Each part of the study was reviewed and discussed with SCCF partners and their comments taken into account.

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8. The "extractive model" refers to a specific mode of wealth accumulation, based on "activities that extract large quantities of natural resources that are not processed (or are processed only to a small extent), mainly for export" (École Normale Supérieure de Lyon).

9. Unfortunately, it was not possible to carry out the missions planned for Brazil and French Guiana.

10. Indigenous peoples are defined in ILO Convention 169 as "populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who [...] retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions."



Two online workshops (one for Latin America, the other for Asia) allowed partners to exchange among themselves and to go deeper into SCCF's advocacy proposals.

In reality, it was difficult to validate the hypotheses. It is true that the villages visited have connections with the world that are based on a unique relationship to their land and territory. Their cosmovisions and practices highlight strong links between nature and culture, territory and identity, the individual and the collective body, the economy and solidarity, tradition and modernity—all this in line with the concept of integral ecology. The issues of sustainability and environmental protection are not always obvious. However, these initial hypotheses provided an entry point for field observation and for going deeper into the question of unsustainable practices and their causes, highlighting significant tensions within the communities encountered.

The underlying approach used in this study was not a scientific one; rather, a learning and participatory approach was adopted to enhance the exchange of experiences. That approach involved many challenges, which were taken into account by SCCF: lack of in-house anthropological expertise, made up for by input/feedback from partners as well as by contributions sought from researchers; missions that were short (5 to 7 days), but carried out by two persons from SCCF mixing skills and expertise, who were accompanied by partners with lengthy experience in the area and who were trusted by the people studied; lack of mastery of the local language and traditions, which was offset by the presence of partners and in particular partner staff who are members of the communities.

The work done falls within the framework of a process of reflection by SCCF on its methods of providing support and on incorporating the concept of integral ecology in its practices.



➔ BANGLADESH



COMMUNITIES



PARTNERS



The village of **Chunia** in Bangladesh has 587 inhabitants, who belong to the Garo people. At the beginning of the 20th century, this community converted to Catholicism, but many aspects of Garo culture remain today and continue to shape the identity of the village's inhabitants. Many of the Garo culture's rituals and traditional dances are

Caritas Bangladesh is an NGO mandated by the Bishops Conference and is a member of Caritas Internationalis. It was founded in 1967. The NGO is active throughout Bangladesh through its eight regional offices and its central office in Dhaka. Caritas Bangladesh works particularly in the areas of social development, the right to education, public health, disaster

related to agriculture or nature. Today, the Chunia community must cope with conflicting aspirations among its inhabitants: while a considerable portion of the community attaches great value to the land and to traditional agricultural practices, its youth often aspire to leave the village to study and work in the city. It is against this backdrop that the identity of the community is undergoing major changes.



management, environmental conservation, promotion of agroecology, and support for indigenous peoples.

The partner relationship between Secours Catholique and Caritas Bangladesh began in 1990, when a horticultural program was established with the ethnolinguistic minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Since then, SCCF and Caritas Bangladesh have carried out many joint actions: support to education projects, implementation of a health program in Mymensingh, and others. In 2007, the two partners developed an integrated development project to enable marginalized and discriminated communities in Bangladesh to access basic services (health, water, and education) and to develop their capacities for socio-economic empowerment through credit cooperatives. Finally, since 2017, SCCF and Caritas Bangladesh have been developing a project for the protection and access to rights of vulnerable women in the slums of Dhaka.

➔ MYANMAR



The village of **Kwaingan** is located in Demoso Township, one hour's drive from Loikaw, the capital of Kayah State. Its inhabitants belong to the Kayan ethnic group and converted to Catholicism at the beginning of the 20th century. The village has a population of 535 people, who live mainly from agriculture. In Kwaingan, Catholicism plays a prominent role in the social and spiritual organization of the community. A few hours drive from Kwaingan is the Douweku community. They belong to the same ethnic group but have conserved their traditional animist beliefs. This Douweku village had also converted to Catholicism in the past, but the community later rejected it. Many of the practices of this community fall within the animistic tradition. For example, a traditional calendar sets the rhythm of the year and the agricultural seasons, and forest and agricultural areas are delimited by the presence of spirits).

Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS) is the social service of the Catholic Church in Myanmar. It was mandated in 2001 by the country's Bishops Conference to serve the poorest. It is a member of the Caritas Internationalis network. From Yangon, the national office coordinates the anti-poverty activities of the 16 dioceses throughout the country. KMSS Loikaw is a diocesan organization created in 1993 to provide relief to the people displaced by the war between the Burmese Army and armed groups of Karens and Karennis. SCCF is working with KMSS Loikaw on projects to make indigenous peoples' land and customary rights recognized and to promote sustainable agricultural practices.



➔ INDIA



Kuradiphasa is a village in Odisha State, located at the foot of the Gandhamardan Mountain, famous for its biodiversity and bauxite deposits. The mountain is also a sacred location in Hindu mythology. The 342 inhabitants of Kuradiphasa belong to the Kondh people and live mainly from growing rice and millet. They have a very close relationship with the forest, which covers a significant portion of their needs (habitat, food, livelihoods, etc.). The forest also plays an important religious and symbolic role. However, increasing droughts, illegal logging, overexploitation of forest resources, the risk of losing some of their land to the extractive industry, and unsustainable medicinal plant harvesting practices are seriously threatening the ecosystems of Gandhamardan Mountain and the way of life of its inhabitants.

Manav Adhikar Seva Samiti (MASS) was founded in 1988 by sociology and anthropology students from the University of Sambalpur to work alongside indigenous communities in Odisha State. MASS works in more than 120 villages to assist people on issues related to the sustainable management of natural resources, promotion of indigenous knowledge, land rights, resilience to climate change, environmental protection, and the development of local value chains. It is also involved in exchanges of experience with other local and regional institutions to facilitate access by indigenous communities to social programs and to initiate research. Since 2015, MASS and SCCF have been working together to help reduce poverty in communities living in the forest, rural, and tribal areas of Bargarh and Sambalpur districts. SCCF contributes in particular to the strengthening of MASS's organizational capacities and to its networking with other partners in Southeast Asia and Latin America.

➔ VIETNAM



The villages **Vi O Lak** and **Vi Klang Hai** are located in Kon Tum Province, in central Vietnam. Their populations are 300 and 450 respectively. These communities belong to the H're ethnic group, which accounts for 0.15% of Vietnam's population. Rice, cassava and acacia cultivation; market gardening; and livestock farming enable the people of Vi O Lak and Vi Klang Hai to meet their food needs and generate income. However, increasing global demand for cassava products is now accelerating both deforestation and the establishment of commercial plantations in the region.

Community Entrepreneur Development Institute (CENDI) is a Vietnamese organization with which SCCF has been working since 2013. CENDI supports indigenous communities in the process of legalizing their customary and land rights, to allow for community-based forest management. It also seeks to promote environmental protection and improvement of people's means of existence through the practice of agroecology. With the support of SCCF, CENDI is working in the municipality of Po E (including the villages of Vi O Lak and Vi Klang Hai) on sustainable land management (forest protection and economic alternatives to cassava monoculture).



➔ PERU



COMMUNITIES



PARTNERS



The village of **Bajo Canampa** is located on the Marañón River, downstream from the city of Santa Maria de Nieva. The 180 families that make up the community identify with the Awajún people, a nomadic warrior people who once lived off the resources of the forest.

Servicio Agropecuario para la Investigación y Promoción Económica (SAIPE) is a non-profit organization of the Society of Jesus. It was created on January 22, 1993, in the Jaén Apostolic Vicariate at the request of the apus (indigenous leaders of the Awajún and

INTRODUCING THE PARTNERS

Today, the community perpetuates the traditions of the Awajún people: its language is spoken by all the inhabitants, knowledge on medicinal plants and on cultivating plots called *chacras* is passed on from generation to generation, and the *ayahuasca* ritual is still practiced by the *pamuk* (spiritual chief) of the village. On the community's territory, the majority of resources come from agriculture. The *chacras* produce abundant corn, bananas, and cassava. The inhabitants also use the forest, lagoon, and rivers to hunt and fish.

Wampis people) of the Upper Marañón, in the Amazonas Department of Condorcanqui Province.

Through human rights defense activities and applied research, SAIPE contributes to the integral development and *buen vivir* of the indigenous peoples of the Upper Marañón. In partnership with SCCF since 2002, SAIPE helps the Awarun and Wampis populations to strengthen their capacity for community mobilisation and advocacy to defend their rights and guarantee peaceful and sustainable management of their territories. In Bajo Canampa, SAIPE offers training for community leaders and activities in agricultural capacity building.

➔ BOLIVIA



The community of **San José del Cavitu** was founded in 1981 when a group of Mojeños Trinitarios was settled. Today, the village is located in the TIM territory (*Territorio Indígena Multiétnico*), where five different ethnic groups live. Many community leaders come from this territory. The San José community is made up of close to 80 families and is located on the banks of the Cavitu River. The region has abundant water and offers favorable conditions for agriculture. The inhabitants can thus grow cassava, corn, bananas, sugar cane, and sometimes rice for their consumption on their agricultural production units, called chaco. One special feature of the community is that they harvest forest cocoa. This rampant and wild cocoa has never been planted by humans, and its harvest is organized collectively by community members.

Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (CIPCA) is a Bolivian, Jesuit inspired NGO, founded in October 1970. It provides organizational, economic, and political support to peasant groups and indigenous peoples. CIPCA is one of the largest rural development NGOs in Bolivia;. Its activities include research and action in the field. The research work carried out in consultation with local organizations leads to public policy proposals at the local, regional, and national levels.

The relationship between SCCF and the CIPCA began in 1999 during an emergency action. Currently, SCCF's cooperation with CIPCA focuses on consolidation of climate-change mitigation and adaptation strategies via promotion of agroecological and family-based systems. In the Beni Department, CIPCA is working with the community of San José del Cavitu because it is home to many of the leaders who participated in the marches of the 1990s calling for the rights of indigenous peoples to be respected. Among other actions, CIPCA supports the community by disseminating agroecological production practices.





PART 1

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES FACED WITH A DOMINANT PREDATORY SYSTEM

I. The unique relationship between indigenous peoples and land

In both Asia and Latin America, the majority of the communities visited described nature as a divine gift and a sacred space inhabited by the gods. In India, we were told “*all our gods live in the forest*” and “*the forest is our life*.” This unique relationship to land and nature leads to the people being strongly attached to their territories. In their representations of the world, nature is a component of identity, and humans belong to the earth and find their place as part of a larger Whole.

A. THE RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE IN THE COSMOVISIONS STUDIED

➤ The rice cycle in Vietnam

In Vietnam, the H're villages of the municipality of Po E are surrounded by mountains, primary forests, and water sources. The villagers are strongly aware of the interdependence between humans and nature, especially with the forest, which they place at the center of everything: “*The forest is all we need. Without trees, how can we have water? How can we grow rice, and how can we survive?*” The spiritual, economic and environmental dimensions are linked through the sacralisation of their means of subsistence, and they take shape in the form of agricultural and forestry rituals.

The H're are well known for their rice. According to their cosmivision, rice has a soul and a sacred spirit. It is the basis of their diet and plays a central role in how village life is organized, by punctuating the traditional calendar each year. There is a customary law¹¹ for rice cultivation, the rules of which are handed down by the elders: only one harvest is allowed per year to let the land rest, land preparation and soil fertilization must be done by buffaloes, and the sale of rice and the use of products harmful to the soil are forbidden. According to the elders, these rules are essential in order to maintain the ecosystem, preserve natural resources, and ensure the village's food sovereignty. It moreover seems that, over time, rice-related ceremonies and rules have adapted to the practices that work best for the protection of natural resources. As a result, their cosmivision, which is never static, has evolved toward true sustainable management.

In recent years, hybrid rice and hybrid cassava have been introduced in villages for larger-quantity production to meet the need for cash. These new practices have not been incorporated into the spiritual and traditional framework of the communities. Customary law does not apply to them, and the use of pesticides is tolerated. Consequently, there are currently two types of practices: traditional subsistence practices, in line with their cosmivision and concerned

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11. Customary law is a set of beliefs, traditions, prohibitions, and practices that evolve over time through generations of experience and observation. It provides a clear framework for the use of natural resources and guides societies in their interactions with their natural environment, from hunting and gathering to agriculture. For this reason, customary law has a very strong social and regulatory function, and it provides for sanctions (economic, social, etc.) in the event of infringement.



with preserving a balance with nature, and modern commercial practices that break with the cosmovision and degrade natural resources. Today, the entire village grows both local rice and hybrid cassava.

➤ In Bolivia and Peru, indigenous peoples ready to die for their land

In Peru, Awajún indigenous spirituality promotes *Tajimat purut* or “well-being”, which means living in harmony with nature and family. By this, the Awajún understand “consume only what is necessary”. As our partner SAIPE says: *“Tajimat purut is in itself an anti-consumerist or anti-productivist philosophy of life. We have small chacras (agricultural plots), we don’t use chemical products, and we cut the trees in such a way that they can regenerate from one season to the next.”*

In Latin America, it is the relationship with their territory more than their relationship with the environment that is highlighted by the communities. European colonization, with its accompanying massacres, slavery, and forced displacements, was a traumatic event for the Amerindian peoples. This part of history has been incorporated into their cosmovision. We especially noted this in Bolivia, among the Mojeños Trinitarios, in the form of the founding myth of the *“Loma Santa”* (holy hill). In the 18th century, as a reaction to European colonization, came the first call of the Mojeños Trinitarios to seek the *“Loma Santa”*—a territory without limits, without borders, without violence, and without poverty, where everyone would find food in abundance and be able to preserve their culture and identity. This metaphor of infinite territory is a form of resistance to colonization. It has enabled the various ethnic groups to defend their territory through a story, passed down from generation to generation, about *“the price to pay for the land,”* which is that of the blood spilled to defend it. For example, a community representative in Peru explains as follows: *“If an Awajún feels that their territory faces a danger, they’re capable of anything. There’s a price to pay for our land. We’d protect it from death, like we would our*



mother... that's what the Awajún feels for nature." This position is still being upheld today, in order to legitimize social control of the territory by the indigenous authorities, to avoid land grabbing by companies.

➤ Growing awareness of environmental issues in Myanmar

In Myanmar, on the other hand, attention paid to the environment seems to be based more on empiric experience than on an ancestral cosmivision. This observation is based on the differences between the two villages visited. They are neighboring villages, and their inhabitants belong to the same Kayan ethnic group. However, one is Catholic, but the other returned to its traditional animist beliefs after a brief conversion to Catholicism was rejected by its inhabitants. Sustainable and unsustainable practices were identified in each village. In Douweku, the animist village, the spiritual dimension seems to be at the heart of practices that remain traditional, and the traditional calendar sets the rhythm for the agricultural seasons. Belief in spirits organizes the village territory into several categories of forests and lands. Sacred forests are preserved from all human intervention and access to them forbidden because they belong to the spirits: villagers are said to have been punished for entering them. There are also "forests to preserve the seasons," whose function is to regulate the local climate¹² (e.g. cooling air in hot periods). Nevertheless, such traditional knowledge and practices have not led to changes in logging practices in the other categories of village forests. In Kwaingan, the Catholic village, the influence of ancestral heritage on economic practices seems to be limited. Religion seems to take precedence over ethnicity in the sense of belonging and identity, and some traditions linked to their ancestral religion and now abandoned are described as "*backward*" or "*pagan*." Paradoxically, it is in this community with a more subdued traditional cosmivision that land management is most consciously sustainable. Faced with the degradation of its forests, the

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12. The IPCC report on climate change and land, published in August 2019, highlights the importance of indigenous knowledge for adaptation practices at the local level (IPCC, *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, SPM, C.1.1).

community has in fact reinvented its rules of governance in order to cope with contemporary environmental issues, and it has set up land-management committees that play a role in environmental protection. The agricultural committee, for example, leads discussions on the use of fertilizers and pesticides and their impact on agricultural soils. In practice, however, the rules laid down by the committees are not always complied with.

B. COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

In most of the villages studied on the two continents, the relationship to the land is essentially collective and is linked to the community's shared responsibility toward nature. Natural resource management decisions are made collectively. The village of Chunia, in Bangladesh, appears to be an exception: the study did not find any evidence of collective management of natural resources or land in this village in recent times, although this had been the case in the past.

These societies are also based on an extremely strong system of mutual obligations: these can be within families, between village members, or between generations. This cohesion and the feeling of having a common identity are fundamental aspects in the management of their territories.

The Indian village of Kuradiphasa is currently waiting for a community law¹³ for its forest to be passed. The villagers set up a forestry committee in 2008 to formally organize the management of the territory's natural resources. The forest is a common good: everyone protects it via a rotation system, and each person is allowed to harvest the products of the forest for self-consumption. Several solidarity mechanisms exist, such as a shared garden of "wild" mango and orange trees for landless people and for coping with famine during droughts. The mutual aid within the village is also very strong for everything concerning construction, work in the fields, food, and weddings, etc.

THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAND IS ESSENTIALLY COLLECTIVE AND IS LINKED TO THE COMMUNITY'S SHARED RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD NATURE.

A special characteristic of San José del Cavitu, in Bolivia, is its community forest cocoa, which grows in the forest, a four hours' walk from the village. It has never been planted by human hands. The management plan for wild cocoa is decided on collectively. Harvesting is always carried out in groups, and is reserved for the inhabitants of the community. The larger the family, the more harvesters they can send. This way, the amount of cocoa harvested is regulated according to the needs of the families. This management plan also includes provisions for collective pruning and maintenance of forest access roads and fire lanes.

In Vietnam, among the H're, the forest is a collective resource, property, and responsibility. But the Vietnamese central government, which controls the majority of the forests, has on several occasions tried to push the village of Vi O Lak to adopt individual rather than collective management of natural resources, even though it is contrary to the values of the community. A few years ago, 21 people from the village were appointed by the public authorities to manage 174 ha of forest in order to "maximize the commercial benefits of the land."¹⁴ These people then

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13. In 2006, the Forest Rights Act (FRA) recognized the traditional rights of Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers to the forest and its resources. It also established community-based and democratic governance.

14. CENDI

turned to the elders, and it was decided in the village assembly that they would be in charge of a monitoring team made up of villagers to manage and protect the forest. The collective is considered essential for this, because it makes it possible to protect forests from personal interests and to preserve natural resources for future generations. This is why most decisions about the use of natural resources, such as planting or harvesting dates, are made at the village level.

II. Multiple pressures on the territories

In the eight villages visited, it can be seen that governance of their territory represents a struggle for the communities as they strive to preserve their specific mechanisms in the face of the processes of assimilation and standardization promoted by the central governments. The legal achievements of this struggle in Bolivia and Peru, with their constitutional recognition of indigenous rights, are only a first step in the effective implementation of these rights. Indeed, standardized education, chemical agricultural practices, and certain development policies upset the balance between the different dimensions present in cosmovisions (social, environmental, spiritual, economic, and cultural). These factors lead to extremely rapid change in the face of an application of rights that requires a long time frame.

A. GOVERNANCE OF INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES CALLED INTO QUESTION BY THE STATE

➤ International law on indigenous peoples inadequately enforced

The political struggles of indigenous peoples led to the creation of a protective international legal framework in 1989, with the promulgation of Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples by the International Labour Organization (ILO).¹⁵ This legal instrument broke with assimilation processes, recognized self-determination, and introduced the principle of free, informed, and prior consultation of indigenous peoples when external parties seek to carry out projects on their territories. Other international frameworks also exist to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples are protected. The World Bank and the vast majority of regional development banks have policies on indigenous peoples.¹⁶ However, none of the Asian countries covered by the present study has ratified Convention 169. Although the governments of Peru and Bolivia have ratified it, real gaps in its application can be observed. While Peru ratified Convention 169 in 1994, it took a long legal battle to get the Lima Court of Appeal to

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15. In addition, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. Though non-binding, its preamble recalls the importance of the territories for the indigenous peoples who occupy them: "...control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs...".

16. World Bank: <https://web.worldbank.org/archive/website00524/WEB/PDF/IPPOLICY.PDF>; Asian Development Bank: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/33441/files/policy-indigenous-peoples.pdf>



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order, in 2018, oil companies to cease operating on some Awajún land (on lot 116 since 2006¹⁷) and set up the consultation process.

Most of the indigenous territories studied are rich in raw materials (oil in Awajún territory in Peru, mahogany wood in Bolivia, bauxite in Odisha in India, etc.). Regardless of whether there is a protective legal framework, all territories suffer cases of land grabbing or appropriation by external actors for extractive purposes or exploitation. Such situations are sometimes facilitated by tensions within the community over how to manage the resources. In Bangladesh, the government is in the process of transforming a rice field into a lake and of developing a tourist complex on land located in three villages (Chunia, Pargacha, and Bhutia). The local MP had promised discussion with the community, but this seems to have been conducted only with a few individuals, without consensus on their legitimacy. Exchanges with the villagers suggest that they do not have any precise knowledge about the consultative process carried out, even though this economic project is part of a program financed by the World Bank.¹⁸ The World Bank claims to have the support of the indigenous populations, but this is contradicted by the field study. This example highlights the difference between the posting of prior consultation as required by the World Bank and the reality of a consultation process with little transparency.

17. SCCF, CCFD Terre Solidaire, 2015, *Le baril ou la vie? Impacts des activités des entreprises pétrolière françaises Perenco, Morell et Prom en Amazonie péruvienne : quelle responsabilité des entreprises et des Etats?*
 18. Sustainable Forests and Livelihoods (SUFAL): <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/loans-credits/2018/10/05/bangladesh-sustainable-forests-livelihoods-project>

➤ Relationship between indigenous customary law and law of the State

The customary law of indigenous communities, which is mostly oral, was often swept away during the colonial era. It was replaced by a written legislative framework that led to the assimilation of indigenous peoples. However, in the eight villages visited, the presence of customary laws remains strong. Both types of law quite often coexist in indigenous territories. This can lead to tension in the governance of the territories.

In Vietnam, customary law and the State legal framework coexist among the H're communities of Vi O Lak and Vi Klang Hai. The State accepts customary law but does not recognize it in its entirety, and it maintains its authority in local management of the territory. The Vietnamese State has a presence in the form of two representatives per village (the local leader of the Communist Party and the leader of the People's Committee). They are in charge of carrying out the policy decided by the Party. Despite this strong State presence, the customary law of the village is exercised by the council of elders, which is formed by village chiefs and families. The council renders justice, resolves conflicts, and is the guarantor of traditions.

In Bangladesh, national courts of justice refer to customary law when plaintiffs there want to settle a land matter. If a woman from the Garo community, which we visited, owns a plot of land and possesses a land title for it, she can pass it on to her daughter upon her death, in accordance with Garo customary law. However, because the State does not recognize customary ownership of land, indigenous peoples are not recognized as owners of their land if they do not have formal land titles.

In 2009, a new constitution was adopted in Bolivia, which became a plurinational state. It takes into account the legislative framework of ILO Convention 169 and allows the construction of political autonomy. Within this framework, the indigenous model was chosen for local governance. A multi-stage process leads to autonomous status. The rights of the non-indigenous populations living in the territory are respected, because the status requires approval by two-thirds of the local population via referendum.¹⁹ This legal format allows indigenous peoples to decide how they manage their territories and the natural resources found there (except those present in the subsoil, which belong to the State). In San José del Cavitu, which is part of the Multi-ethnic Indigenous Territory (TIM), the recognition of autonomy has enabled the community to decide collectively to maintain local family farming suitable to the local context and the needs of the local people. The process of obtaining autonomy was long and complicated and has not been exempt of violence, but the inhabitants currently feel safe on their territory.

B. TRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE: THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION

➤ Young people involved in community governance

Access to education is one of the major recent developments. It is seen by many as a positive development, as it builds the capacity of young people, thereby also benefiting the community. In India, an increasing number of young people from Kuradiphasa (the village visited) and its

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19. Lacroix Laurent (2012), "L'institutionnalisation des autonomies indigènes en Bolivie": <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00753858/document>



surrounding area are pursuing their studies. They use new technologies to become informed and educated and to help their families. "Young people know a lot more about everything than we do," said one elder. Young people are also strongly involved in the life of their village. The young chair of the Forestry Committee said that it is very important for him to become involved in protecting the community's forest and to raise awareness among other young people in neighboring villages. Another young person explained that he chose to study political science because he wants to help his village escape poverty: "My dream is to develop my village."

In Bolivia, in San José del Cavitu, young people know the story about their community's origins, including the legend of the "sacred hill" and other accounts about the origin of their people. Of the 50 or so young people, only 4 expressed a desire to leave their village; all the others want to be educated or trained and return to improve the living conditions of the villagers, e.g. for health, education, and agriculture.

➤ Access to education: a lever for development, or for cultural assimilation?

Integration into the national education system is perceived in several cases as a risk to indigenous identity, with some fearing the transmission process will be destabilized. In Myanmar, education has long been part of a system of assimilation of indigenous communities and has influenced their lifestyles, beliefs, and languages. When students started school, they had to change their first names to a Burmese name. In Bangladesh, children study only in the country's official language, to the detriment of their mother tongue. In Vietnam, the Education Law (2005) affirms the determination to preserve the diversity of the 54 ethnic minorities, but it is difficult to implement in some areas. Indeed, school teachers are from the majority Kinh ethnic group and teach only in Vietnamese. The H're leaders of the villages met with expressed concern about



their community's new generations. Transmission of knowledge and traditions is mainly done through everyday acts and practices and by the stories told by the elders. However, since the new generations have been going to school, the transmission process has been destabilized because the children now spend more time at school than in the village, coming back only for holidays. The elders explained that ceremonies and beliefs are increasingly challenged by young people because they are discredited in schools and in the city. Young people are generally attached to their culture but question the meaning of rituals: *"We don't always know the exact meaning; we do it because it's our tradition; it's what we've always done."*

➤ The search for balance between traditional and State education

Historically, the Awajún in Peru were a warrior people who long resisted Spanish colonization. They followed a very codified traditional initiation, led by the *pamuk*, the spiritual leader. The Awajún imbibed *ayahuasca*²⁰ and were then sent into the forest to find their role in the war by connecting with nature under its psychotropic effects. The Awajún continue to send their children on this traditional spiritual training, despite its prohibition by some churches, especially evangelical ones. This is the case in the community of Bajo Canampa. This training enables Awajún children to find their place in the collective group, as transmission is considered essential for preserving values and connecting to nature, which is a constituent element of their identity as a people.

At the same time, young people go to public school. The elementary school, located in the community, provides instruction in Awajún and Spanish. But to continue their schooling they must go to the city, to schools where instruction is in Spanish only. As a result, the rate of access to higher education for Awajún

THE RATE OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR AWAJÚN AND OTHER INDIGENOUS YOUTH REMAINS LOW COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE POPULATION.

and other indigenous youth remains low compared to the rest of the population.²¹ Despite these difficulties, education is seen as a powerful lever for obtaining recognition of rights and for preservation of Awajún identity. It is for this reason that some communities have set up education that is alternative and complementary to national education. Many Awajún leaders are now bilingual in Spanish and Awajún. Additionally, they are proficient in international legal instruments, enabling them to enter into negotiations with the Peruvian government to advance the effective recognition of their rights, including the provisions of ILO Convention 169. This adaptation of the training of leaders is giving a new boost of energy to relations with the central government, with the confrontational approach stemming from their warrior culture now being focused on dialog and negotiations.

C. HARMFUL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES?

In Vietnam, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, and Peru, rural development policies initiated by the government's technical services are applied without adaptation to local specific characteristics. Furthermore, these policies do not take into account local practices and knowledge and can even compromise them. Officials promote the benefits of intensive agriculture as a means to fight poverty. Because of this, they often promote the green revolution by proposing hybrid seeds, the use of chemical pesticides, unsuitable imported crops, and monoculture to support a production-based agriculture. This process has followed a specific path in Bolivia. The 2009 Constitution and the ensuing legislation encouraged family farming. In recent years, however, it is rather agroindustry and the extension of the agricultural front that have been promoted and supported. Meanwhile, in Kwaingan and Douweku villages in Myanmar's Kayah State, the central government is encouraging cash crops by distributing hybrid seeds. This causes loss of both indigenous know-how and traditional seeds. This is also the case in Kuradiphasa

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20. In the interviews conducted in the community, *ayahuasca* was also called the "master plant." This natural psychotropic mixture made from lianas is used as a tool for the transmission of traditional teaching.

21. According to the 2007 national census, "less than 30% of the indigenous Amazonian population (including the Awajún) over 15 years of age have reached the secondary education level" and "less than 50% (47.3%) of the indigenous Amazonian population have completed primary education": <http://centroderecursos.cultura.pe/sites/default/files/rb/pdf/Lineamientos-enfoque-intercultural-universidades-interculturales.pdf>

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Village in India: when villagers refused the pesticides proposed by the central government, the authorities came at night to spray the rice fields with pesticides. In Peru, cucumber seeds, although unsuited to the Amazonian climate, were offered without technical support. This is evidenced by the cucumber vines burned by the sun and that failed to grow in the "home garden corners" of the *chacras*.



"The Peruvian State is like the monkey that wants to save the fish that swims quietly in the river and that, to do so, takes it out of the water."

Santiago, from SAIPE

III. Communities undergoing in-depth and rapid change

The communities studied are undergoing major internal changes. Population growth and changes in lifestyle are factors that put pressure on territories and their natural resources. The inhabitants must also adapt their practices to the new realities brought about by climate change. More generally, it is the vision of the world and society that is being reexamined. There is indeed determination, particularly in Latin America, to preserve identity, territory, diversity, and equality of rights and access to basic services. At the same time, however, some sections of the communities want to become part of the dominant society and enjoy access to its same consumer goods and living conditions. This creates tensions and contradictions within the villages.

A. SETTLING AND POPULATION GROWTH

The indigenous populations we met had previously been nomadic or semi-nomadic but have gradually settled down. In Peru, the territory of the Bajo Canampa community, located not far from Santa Maria de Nieva, was granted in 1975. Settling has brought about a change of habits along with the development of agriculture within the *chacras*, but hunting has remained an important means of subsistence. When the community was semi-nomadic, animal and plant species had time to regenerate. But once the community settled, the inhabitants hunted



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within a smaller range, and these species were gradually depleted. Community rules were then introduced to preserve resources. Fishing, for example was provided with a framework to allow fish time to reproduce. However, the fishing rules have been rendered inoperative due to the use of a natural poison, which kills large amounts of them, without selection and without differentiating pregnant females or fry. Furthermore, there is no management plan for natural resources as a whole.

Strong population growth, due in particular to improved health conditions, is also leading to a fragmentation of land set aside for agriculture among family members. In India, in Kuradiphasa Village, this creates tensions: land sharing is based on inheritance, and families have divided up their agricultural plots from generation to generation. Today, the plots are too small to allow families to make a living from farming. New generations are no longer able to access land, leading to migration to find alternative livelihoods. The same is true in Peru, where the Bajo Canampa community grew from 9 families in 1975 to 180 families in 2019.

On the other hand, the Bolivian practice of recognition of an integral territory (recognition on the scale of one or more indigenous peoples, and not of a village) offers an alternative to land fragmentation. In this system, the inhabitants can cultivate an area much larger than the territory of the village as such: *"We cultivate as a family, opening up plots in the forest and integrating them with the environment. We're not limited in space. We open up our chacos²² as we need them and let the forest grow back on the ones we don't use anymore."*

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22. Small plots of land cultivated by village families for self-consumption.

B. AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES CHANGED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has pointed out that indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, even though they contribute very little to greenhouse gas emissions.²³ Climate disruptions, which can be verified on the ground, are exacerbating the difficulties already faced by indigenous peoples and posing a real threat to their survival. All the communities visited made the same observation that natural cycles are being destabilized, and consequently their livelihoods too.

In Myanmar, village elders in Kwaingan and Douweku mentioned climate change as a new threat. They said that, in the past, extreme events (rain, heat waves, cold) occurred once every 10–15 years, whereas now they happen every 2–3 years. Forest fires are also more intense and more frequent. The year 2019 was moreover described locally as the worst year in terms of unpredictability.

In India, the Gandhamardan Mountains are home to hundreds of plant species essential to the survival of many indigenous communities. Climate change is disrupting these ecosystems, and an increasing number of species are threatened. In Kuradiphasa, "*the young trees can no longer grow; only the older ones resist these changes.*" The spiritual practices of the Kondhs are traditionally linked to agricultural and forestry practices, through specific rituals covering the beginning and end of harvests of several species, such as the Mahua flower. Climate change is disrupting the flowering of the Mahua, which is now out of sync with the ritual harvest calendar. This leads to crop loss and to the younger generation putting into question certain traditions, which to them seem disconnected from the reality of current climatic conditions. Some ancestral practices that linked agricultural practices and spirituality have become obsolete because of these upheavals.

The San José del Cavitu community in Bolivia recently experienced a major fire,²⁴ which the villagers could not put out because of strong winds. It devastated many of the forest cocoa plants. Drought, due to climate change, is identified as the main cause of the situation. Since then, adaptation strategies have been implemented, by using a system of fire lanes to manage the risks of the increasingly frequent fires.

C. AN AMBIVALENT RELATIONSHIP TO MODERNITY

The field survey in Bangladesh indicated that the inhabitants of Chunia have an ambivalent relationship to modernity. They seem to be going through an in-depth questioning of their vision of the world and of society. This example is emblematic of what we saw elsewhere.

Historically, the indigenous community in the study area has been deprived of land rights, access to education, road infrastructure, and economic development. Access to the forest that the Garo community used to use for its livelihood is now restricted, they have no land title for the land it occupies, they do not have enough land to feed their growing population, and they lack employment opportunities for everyone. Some of the inhabitants are therefore leaving

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23. *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*, IPCC, 2018; *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, IPCC, 2019.

24. The head of the cocoa producers committee could not recall the exact year, but cross-checking of information, particularly with the CIPCA teams, indicates it was around 2017.



home in search of better living conditions. Farming tends to be looked down upon, and the people who are shown as examples of success stories are those who have been able to go to school in the city and find skilled employment outside the village. Aspirations to become economically integrated into the dominant society are in direct conflict with and contradictory to the energy expended to secure their land as well as to their very strong attachment to the land. The community asserts its freedom to practice and live out Garo culture in a predominantly Muslim society.

Needs for cash to finance education or the purchase of consumer goods are at the root of unsustainable agricultural practices. In all the communities encountered, farmers are abandoning traditional mixed farming in favor of industrial monoculture agriculture. Meanwhile, local seeds are being replaced by hybrid seeds that give better yield in the short term thanks to the use of chemical inputs. However, this type of production causes a decline in biodiversity and impoverishes soils, thereby generating an ever-increasing need for inputs and a vicious circle of dependence by the farmers on chemicals and the companies that market them. This helps exacerbate the poverty of the local populations and leads to the loss of traditional agricultural knowledge. Another problem is lack of information: in Vietnam, the H're say that when they were encouraged to use pesticides, they were not informed about the consequences on the environment and on their health.

In Bangladesh, the villagers of Chunia are trying to reconcile the two approaches to meeting financial liquidity needs, without necessarily being aware of the porous nature of both practices. Traditional agricultural practices, resulting from shifting cultivation of mixed crops, are used for family subsistence. Intensive farming practices that use hybrid seeds of exogenous species and chemicals are preferred for production that is sold. In the agricultural plots, the two types

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of crops are mixed, but the villagers differentiate them according to their purpose: self-consumption or sale. At the same time, many villagers, driven by their need for cash, lease their land to people from outside the village (farmers or businessmen who are not members of the community). These outsiders use unsustainable agricultural practices (multiple chemical inputs, etc.) to ensure a high return on investment during the term of the lease (5 to 10 years).

In the villages observed in Myanmar, young people in particular do not seem opposed to this increasingly visible modernity and sometimes welcome it with envy. They explain their growing cash needs as being necessary to improve their family's living conditions; to buy a phone, motorcycle or house; or to prepare for their future wedding. At the time of our field mission, more than half of the young people were away from the village and working in an open-pit jade mine.



The lifestyle of the indigenous communities studied is thus highly porous with regard to the lifestyle of the dominant society, particularly when it comes to education and economic practices. This porosity, which is closely linked to integration into consumer society, highlights the contradiction between their desire to preserve indigenous identity (often accompanied by defensive discourse) and attraction (sometimes on the part of the same people) to the apparent comfort of consumerist life. On top of that, the collective dimension specific to the indigenous communities encountered is being undermined by the promise of individual emancipation (for oneself or one's children) brought on by education.

PART 2

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?



This second section is based on the fourth hypothesis presented in the section on methodology, i.e. "Support from the partners and SCCF fosters the respect and promotion of indigenous peoples' practices." The aim here is to study the practices of support to indigenous communities implemented by the six partners from Asia and Latin America that participated in the field study. The lessons learned will provide fuel for thought to strengthen the partnership relation between the SCCF and its partners.

The field visits and the conversations that followed revealed two main themes: first, common principles in the actions to support indigenous peoples, and, second, a shared commitment with indigenous communities to work for change.

I. The principles of support for indigenous communities

Despite different characteristics (in culture, country, volume of activity, etc.), the partners in this study share a similar approach to supporting indigenous communities. This is reflected above all in the very choice to work with indigenous communities and in the particular attention paid to understanding their lifestyles (A). The participatory dimension is also always present, with the goal of promoting local knowledge (B). Finally, the astuteness of the partners' work lies in their search for a stance as ally and facilitator (C).

Beyond the historical contexts unique to each country, the involvement of SCCF partners with indigenous populations is based on the following joint analysis:

- 1 the target communities are the most marginalized and the most vulnerable in the face of economic development, which is sometimes deregulated;
- 2 They most often live in areas rich in natural resources that the dominant society wants to exploit, whereas their own lifestyles are based on a measured use of these resources. For our partners, protecting these indigenous communities means protecting nature and vice versa. This relationship necessarily implies taking into account the notion of sustainable land management, even if it varies from one partner to another.

MASS, for example, works with the Kondhs from the perspective of natural resource management but at the same time includes the issue of access to basic services for people affected by exclusion and marginalization. CENDI believes that, for the most remote and biodiversity-rich territories, it is the indigenous communities living there who are the most legitimate to protect those territories, given their knowledge. That is why ecosystem preservation is inseparable from support for the H're villages. For SAIPE, working with indigenous communities requires a great deal of effort because their world view is vulnerable to the dominant culture. There are also huge inequalities between these communities and the rest of society, in terms of levels of education, malnutrition, access and communication routes, and public and private physical infrastructure.



A. RESPECT FOR LIFESTYLES: THE IMPORTANCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

The partners in the six countries involved in this field study pay particular attention to understanding the indigenous communities they support and the uniqueness of the relationship they have with their territory. At the heart of their approach is a deep respect for the cosmivision of the indigenous peoples.

In India, for each village it supports, MASS draws up an integral analysis of the territory along with the communities, by examining the close links among the various aspects that make it up (socio-economic composition, natural resources, agricultural and spiritual practices, etc.). This approach, in which we see a reflection of integral ecology, helps to identify problems, levers, and available resources. The analysis is carried out anew after a few years along with the villagers, to work on what has changed. This makes it possible to document the changes that have occurred in the territory (decline in biodiversity, drying up of rivers, impacts of extractive industries or climate change, etc.) and to assess the impact of indigenous practices on natural resources. MASS, for example, has succeeded in demonstrating that deforestation has decreased since the village of Kuradiphasa formalized and activated its forestry committee. These results make it possible to recognize the role of local communities as players in biodiversity protection, thereby helping to strengthen the credibility of their territorial claims. On the basis of these assessments, MASS proposes ideas for action that are adapted to the local context. These are then worked out with the villagers in a participatory manner.

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In Peru, SAIPE has been working since 1993 with Awajún and Wampis communities in a holistic approach: *"It's not possible to think about what is productive [in partner actions with the community] without considering prior knowledge and the way in which families and the community are organized, just as it's not possible to train leaders without considering indigenous culture and spirituality as well as the structure and the production methods and lifestyles in the families and communities. For this reason, the productive projects implemented by SAIPE include opportunities for promoting indigenous peoples' rights as well as their organization, their ancestral knowledge, and intercultural dialog. As for the social projects, they have as their backbone the safeguarding and re-enhancement of indigenous spirituality, cultural identity, production methods, and lifestyle of the families and communities. The changes currently taking place in the lives of indigenous peoples in such a rapidly changing world need to be interpreted correctly, and the impact of other cultures must be measured."*

A strong, common, and shared vision between the communities and SAIPE was built by including indigenous persons on the team. Today, nearly all of SAIPE's salaried staff are Awajún and Wampis.

One of the tools helping to involve the communities in the analysis of their territory is action research,²⁵ which is implemented by many of our partners.²⁶ Action research leads to shared understanding of history, cultural identity, sacred and spiritual sites, and traditional knowledge.

Since its creation, CIPCA has always been careful to work closely with people in the field (to go where others do not go), and to respect their lifestyles, cosmovisions, beliefs, proposals, knowledge, forms of organization and language. From there, CIPCA strives to strengthen the capacities of men and women in rural development in a holistic way (social, political, organizational, economic, technical, technological and environmental). CIPCA has multidisciplinary teams and works closely with communities, universities, research centers and local authorities. This work sometimes leads to public policy proposals at the local, regional and national levels.

This is meticulous work, some of which is anthropological. It most often involves action on a human scale and for which the trust established between partners and communities is crucial and takes time.

B. PROMOTING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

There are many action research tools, but one of the most used by our partners is participatory mapping. It enables the partners to provide a reliable visual representation of a community's perception of the place where it lives and the links it maintains with its territory. The purpose is twofold: to better understand the culture of indigenous peoples in order to better support them, and to promote it better in order to find inspiration from it and to maintain it.

By making communities proactive in reflection, participatory action research is an excellent exercise in knowledge transmission. It can also promote the maintenance of sustainable traditional practices and local cultural specificities. A sense of pride and belonging in the face of an external dominant culture is thereby created.

In the CENDI programs, all research to document knowledge and customs and to promote sustainable land-management practices is carried out with the villagers: research on traditional medicinal plants, mapping of mother trees, spiritual rituals, village history, etc. In the municipality of Po E, several leaders explained that the interest paid to their ancestral knowledge shows them that they have nothing to be ashamed of and that, on the contrary, the richness of that knowledge makes it a source of pride.

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25. In action research, both the researchers and the stakeholders participating in the experimentation are involved in the process of designing the research. The subjectivity and knowledge of the actors are taken into account. In an approach where everyone is assumed to have knowledge and the equality of knowledge is recognized, it is easier for people to make their knowledge known. The stakeholders are the authors of the skills they produce.

26. An exception is Caritas Bangladesh.

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In Douweku Village in Myanmar, the preparatory work of KMSS Loikaw consists in having its inhabitants talk about the history of the village and the territory, nature, and also their traditional rules and customs. This is written down, sometimes for the first time, in a full assembly session. In addition to the concrete activity (here, the creation of participatory mapping), the customary chief explains that it is the collective memory of the village that is thus promoted and passed on to the whole village—young and old, women and men—during these discussions.

C. THE PARTNERS AS “ALLIES” OF THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The partners participating in the study are close to the indigenous communities with which they work. This is especially seen by their stance as an “ally,”²⁷ for whom the best interest of the indigenous populations is paramount. Organizations or networks that claim to be allies have the duty to be very respectful of indigenous peoples and to avoid imposing their intervention logic at all costs.

As mentioned earlier, indigenous communities are increasingly exposed to external pressures (economic, cultural, etc.). They sometimes lack knowledge due to their isolation and poor access to information to deal with threats to their ways of life. Through their work, SCCF partners bring a different opinion and a fresh perspective, thereby creating a space for dialog to propose an alternative choice.

In Vietnam, CENDI carries out awareness-raising activities among villagers to inform them of the dangers linked to introducing new agricultural techniques such as the use of chemical pesticides (impacts on human and animal health) and cassava monoculture. CENDI carried out a comparative survey of income from cassava cultivation and income from traditional cultivation. Beyond the question of deforestation and impact on biodiversity, the survey shows that cassava monoculture leads to declining harvests over time (loss of soil fertility), and increase in profit from its use is not proven. CENDI is now seeking to propose an alternative crop with the use of fruit trees, based on the same production cycle as cassava. The partner is thus providing a different analysis from that of the food industry, all the while offering an alternative.

In Myanmar, slash-and-burn crop rotation has long been considered environmentally damaging and unproductive. In order to promote access to income, cash crops were encouraged, which led to a decrease in land productivity due to soil pollution from pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. In 2017, KMSS Loikaw conducted a participatory study²⁸ in a village close to those we visited. The study shows that, under certain conditions, the practice of slash-and-burn crop rotation is carbon neutral or even positive, as it sequesters CO₂. Providing a different perspective on traditional practices is a way of defending the community.

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27. “This concept is used in some activist circles to refer to those who are not directly oppressed but who wish, in their struggles, to support those directly concerned. Being an ally is an ethical and political choice. It means making the choice, when one enjoys certain social privileges, to consider these latter unjust and to help fight against social inequality and/or related discrimination.” Translated from: <http://www.education-populaire.fr/lethique-de-lalliee/>

28. *Livelihood, Land Use and Carbon - A Study on the Carbon Footprint of a Shifting Cultivation Community in Kayah State*, KMSS Loikaw, 2017.



BADHON CHIRAN / CARITAS BANGLADESH

BANGLADESH

The partners are constantly looking for a balanced position between influence, on the one hand, and respect for local traditions on the other. It is a matter of convincing communities and of providing new knowledge, but not of deciding for them.

As Caritas Bangladesh says, "*We must inspire without ever imposing.*" Change is based on a long-term process and respect for traditions. The first step is to explain the extent to which the change/activity/project could benefit the group. It is then important to share concrete examples and illustrations. This is how agroecological practices are introduced.

For CIPCA, in Bolivia, respecting traditions is not contradictory with introducing new agricultural techniques to improve the living conditions of communities. When CIPCA makes economic and productive proposals, it promotes a set of sustainable practices for the management of natural resources and land. Beyond access to land, the issue at stake is for indigenous communities to be able to develop actions to control and sustainably manage their territories. In San José del Cavitu, the agroforestry systems set up by CIPCA have been adopted by families because they improve food security and generate economic resources through the sale of processed and non-processed surplus products. Supporting indigenous peoples thus does not mean advocating the status quo or a return to archaic practices, but rather providing complementary knowledge and expertise.

Dialog thus gives communities confidence, strengthens their power to act and at times readjust an asymmetrical balance of power vis-à-vis other players (businesses, government agricultural advisers, agricultural policies, etc.).

II. Common lines of action

In addition to a common base of support for indigenous communities, the work of the SCCF partners has other similarities. Claiming land rights and customary rights is the basis for working with indigenous groups (Section A). At the same time, the aim is to encourage or promote a system of governance consistent with indigenous traditions and the knowledge that indigenous communities have of their territories (Section B). They attempt to meet people's aspirations for additional sources of income by taking on the challenge of short-term needs and sustainability (Section C). Finally, they promote collective actions and create meeting spaces through networking and exchange of good practices (Section D), all the while conducting multi-level advocacy (Section E).

A. MAKING CUSTOMARY AND LAND RIGHTS RECOGNIZED

➤ The collective dimension of the demand for land rights

Although there are differences between Asia and Latin America that can be explained by history and the political and legislative background, the demand for collective land rights for indigenous communities is a point in common in the partners' actions.

As SAIPE explains, a community's territory is an intrinsic and inseparable part of indigenous lifestyles: *"It's not possible to think of [land and customary rights] separately."* This is why it is important to recognize the right to land as a fundamental right that is not limited to occupation from an economic point of view (as perceived by the State), but that has implications for social organization, cultural transmission, and spiritual life. This is why it is important to link the two rights and to include them in the same approach. In Bolivia, similar reflections have led to an important step forward in the recognition of the collective rights of indigenous peoples: land belongs to the collective group, and individuals have only a right to use the land. Customary practices, recognized via the right to self-determination, determine through tacit recognition the land that families can farm.

All the partners carry out, to different levels, advocacy actions for the recognition of these rights. The level of State recognition of indigenous peoples varies from one place to another, and the claims adapt to this.

Latin America is the region that has made the most progress in the field of constitutional and legislative recognition of the rights of indigenous communities. In Bolivia, CIPCA supports indigenous organizations to implement empowerment processes. It also helps them better grasp national and international norms, so that this legislative recognition does not remain in limbo. One key aspect of their support is training leaders and backing up their effective representation and participation in local government bodies.

➤ Participatory mapping for demanding rights

Among our Asian partners, participatory mapping is the tool used most for demanding rights and for including land and customary aspects in them. This is because participatory mapping



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makes it possible to carry out non-confrontational advocacy, to ensure both the security of the organizations and a good relationship with the authorities, and to foster communication between the local community and decision-makers. In a context of land grabbing in Myanmar, KMSS uses participatory “*counter-mapping*” so that communities can as a preventive measure protect themselves against external actors establishing a framework without their consultation or agreement. It helps to collectively clarify the boundaries of targeted villages using GPS data, to resolve territorial conflicts, and to document customary laws and governance models. In the absence of a clear national law, this tool is essential because it allows local authorities to become aware of the data provided by the communities and in this way promotes better protection of the territories.

Alongside the challenge of recognizing land and customary rights, one of the main difficulties is the weak application of existing legal provisions. In this case, non-governmental organizations play an essential role in the implementation of national laws at the local level. They provide better information on laws at all levels and act as a link between local authorities (which often lack resources) and communities. MASS, CIPCA, and CENDI have often been the missing link between the local populations and the administrations involved. They have helped improve the deployment of aid and public policies and reach people in very remote villages. In this respect, they sometimes play a role that should be assumed by the State.

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➤ The advocacy demands must come from the communities

SAIPE in Peru is training the representatives of tomorrow's indigenous communities to take on their advocacy themselves. Through holistic training (in spirituality, history, culture, politics, etc.), the young Awajún and Wampis leaders strengthen their identity and build their own responses to Western society, thereby affirming an alternative development model in the face of the dominant model. SAIPE equips these future leaders with keys to understanding Peruvian laws and their own territory. Finally, the training seeks to provide content and a political objective to the ongoing empowerment process. Different visions clash within the Awajún people, and this school provides a space for dialog and for building a common political vision.

For Caritas Bangladesh, "*Advocacy must be community driven.*" Acting as a facilitator, Caritas Bangladesh organizes training on indigenous peoples' rights, encourages community members to speak out, and provides legal support to individuals demanding that their land rights be regularized. The organization also supported the forming and consolidation of a network, in which one committee per village was created and a representative chosen from each village to a body bringing together 22 villages. This network can be quickly mobilized and respond at any time (in the case of an arrest for example). This is a way for Caritas Bangladesh to contribute

to the rise of an indigenous political voice in a context where, as a Catholic organization in a Muslim country, it must remain cautious about its advocacy work. Despite some success at the local level, it is difficult to relay these voices to the national level.

B. FOSTERING COLLECTIVE GOVERNANCE OF COMMON GOODS

In most of the communities visited, social relations appear to be based on values of cooperation and cohesion, thanks to a feeling of being rooted in the community and a strong sense of belonging. The partner organizations help guide the villagers in thinking about the collective management of common goods, and they encourage the inhabitants to create, formalize, or strengthen their own governance of their territory.

In India, MASS supports villagers in setting up a forestry committee that formalizes and organizes forest management and monitoring. At the same time, with MASS support the communities established a women's mutual-aid group and a local seed bank managed by a group of farmers. The community is offered training to improve their skills (technical training and training in organic farming, management, communication and decision-making, and government social programs). Such training also fosters networking with other stakeholders, such as associations, platforms, and public authorities. A major effort is being made to connect financial institutions and villagers so that the latter can obtain credit. MASS supports the development of mechanisms that allow people to both take ownership of the new regulations and make up for the multiple discriminations and difficulties they encounter. Because MASS is aware of the importance of local authorities in governance, it provides capacity building for Panchayat (local council) members and promotes their involvement at the local level so that they fully understand their mandate and develop dialog with the local communities.

In 2018, SAIPE implemented a project that helped strengthen Awajún governance. This initiative sought to strengthen the capacities of civil servants, municipal councilors, and mayors in the management and implementation of public policies with an intercultural approach. Its objective was to raise awareness among the indigenous population about the mechanisms of public management and to educate non-indigenous public servants about Awajún culture. Thanks to this knowledge, indigenous leaders initiated the process of creating the Awajún Autonomous Territorial Government, with the support of civil society organizations.

C. RECONCILING URGENT ECONOMIC NEEDS WITH SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT

The economic aspect, through the question of how to make a living, appeared to be a major concern in all our interviews with indigenous communities. The partners focus on sustainability of sources of income (long-term revenue) and deal with the challenge of finding solutions in the short term (urgent cash needs). One of the main difficulties is to work simultaneously on two different time frames: one an urgent need for income and the other the setting up of new sustainable livelihoods, which takes a long time. For CENDI, providing additional means of subsistence beyond lifting people out of poverty means protecting the H're cosmivision. CENDI

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is determined to promote an economy that preserves local traditions and the collective group, e.g. by creating community enterprises.

KMSS Loikaw is working to provide sustainable livelihoods but comes up against the need for cash: the villagers are always looking for more income, and other organizations are proposing them new types of crops that use synthetic inputs, without conducting any real prior impact assessment. When the team works to promote sustainable agriculture, it cannot take the liberty of saying that all chemicals should be banned. It nevertheless makes sure that it encourages their reduction, especially in the case of production for family consumption. On some land, the people can grow crops without chemicals and are encouraged to grow long-term cash crops using agroecological principles. As KMSS Loikaw explains, *"We promote sustainable agricultural livelihoods, but we must find intermediate solutions."*

The question of how to integrate the market economy is therefore crucial. Partner organizations sometimes fluctuate between a pragmatic model (better equipping indigenous communities and integrating them into the market economy in order to better protect them) and the desire to find an alternative model (rejecting an economic model that marginalizes them).

PAYMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Payments for environmental services (PES) are a tool set up either by the State or directly by a private company to remunerate the preservation of biodiversity, the protection of forests and/or water sources, or any other "service" provided by nature to humans. A number of issues arise regarding these practices: the question of putting a price on nature and its financialization, the problem of administrative work to obtain funds (which is easier for well-developed stakeholders to perform), and conflicts that can occur when these funds are redistributed in the villages. In Peru, for example the Bosques program pays communities 10 soles (2.30 euros) per square meter; however, this compensation for nature protection is inadequate because the program also allows for deforestation permits to be granted. These solutions therefore seem risky. If their implementation is unavoidable, minimum safeguard criteria must be applied:

- Significant and regular financial compensation;
- Recognized, clear, and enforceable land rights;
- Safeguards so that the payments are effectively distributed to the entire community, with equity for youth and women in particular taken into account.

For some partners, the problem with their agroecology projects is to find regular buyers and consumers who can represent a stable source of income. This implies finding the means and skills to conduct market analyses, design goods adapted to the target groups, and be able to access sustainable distribution channels.

CIPCA goes further than this, via dialog on an alternative development model. Because of the nature of the agricultural model of the indigenous peoples of Beni, integration into the conventional market is not the main objective: they mostly produce for their own consumption and then sell their surplus. For this reason, CIPCA and the local communities are asking

themselves questions about whether they should set limits in the search for better agricultural productivity, however ecological it may be: Should they aim for a yield that goes beyond self-sufficiency? Should they follow the law of the market and maximize profits?

D. EXCHANGES OF PRACTICES AND NETWORKING FOR CHANGING SCALE

Support for indigenous communities is described as a long-term process with step-by-step changes. There is one very concrete practice popular with all the partners: they rely on exchanges of experience and networking among the communities they support. The idea is both to identify and replicate good practices and to create opportunities for meeting together and learning. Their goal is to create a collective, change the scale of influence or activity, and ensure the sustainability of actions.

In India, MASS identifies good practices in its area of operations and facilitates their adaptation in neighboring villages. It also organizes exchanges of experiences between different villages on agricultural practices and on land and forest management. For example, MASS observed some people build small walls of earth and stone on the forest slopes to slow down water flow and fight soil erosion. This system was shown and disseminated in Kuradiphasa and in other villages with the same topography where the method is suitable.

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In Vietnam, the creation of networks of “relay farmers” who will carry on CENDI’s tasks is at the heart of the organization’s action. It is both its exit strategy and the embodiment of the sustainability of its work, as it forms a way for projects to be taken over when they end or when an organization disappears. Essentially, this network seeks to bring together community members from the various projects to share experiences and knowledge, and above all to promote a vision of nature conservation and of rights of ethnic minorities and their empowerment. This network is structured around a small nature reserve managed by CENDI. It is a space for meeting together (a laboratory of ideas) and experimentation (agroecological pilot farms), and a training center. It is also a showcase for raising the awareness of policy-makers.

E. BUILDING MULTI-LEVEL ADVOCACY WITH THE COMMUNITIES

Going beyond the local level is essential in building a balance of power that can change laws that will advance recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights. Our partners’ strategies include several levels of action; they adapt to the contexts in which they operate and bring into action different levers for change.

CIPCA carries out advocacy at several levels and has achieved concrete results: laws have been approved locally²⁹ and nationally³⁰ on protection and recognition of Baures forest cocoa as a traditional crop, enabling it to enjoy State aid.

As with all advocacy, moving to the national or international level presents the challenge of linking an overall political interpretation with the demands of the local communities themselves. KMSS Loikaw in Myanmar runs a participatory advocacy project: the community conducts advocacy directly targeting decision-makers via KMSS-facilitated access to local or national platforms. However, the major difficulty is to reduce the significant gap between the demands of the national collectives of organizations based in Yangon (recognition of indigenous peoples by the Burmese government in particular) and those of the villages, which focus mainly on the security of their territories, at their own level. Links among the communities, local concerns, and the need to carry out national reflection are the added value of our allies. But the persistent difficulty of implementing such connections is an obstacle to creating the balance of power needed to achieve legal or political victories.

This is also where complementarity must emerge between what can be done at the local level and the networking from which the partner benefits, at the regional or national level. Presence on the ground makes it possible to pass on local concerns to the national advocacy networks. This is what SAIPE does through its participation in the Amazonas collective. After years of struggles and advocacy, this collective succeeded in having the Second Civil Chamber of the Superior Court of Justice of Lima order the suspension of the validity of the license contract for the exploration and exploitation of oil patch 116 (which is in Awajún territory), and the postponement of activities "until a free, prior and informed consultation procedure is carried out." However, this is not possible everywhere, due to specific aspects of national legal frameworks.

Several partners (CENDI, MASS, Caritas Bangladesh, CIPCA) are trying to bridge this gap by organizing field visits for local or national authorities (e.g. MPs and members of law-writing commissions) in order to give communities the opportunity to express themselves directly to political decision-makers and to have them see the real situation concretely.

F. POINTS OF ATTENTION, POINTS OF INSPIRATION

While the work with the indigenous communities met with can have similarities with that carried out with other vulnerable and marginalized populations, it does have the specific characteristic of shedding light on the need for the various dimensions of integral ecology to be better linked. Implementing support that meets the specific nature of indigenous populations is obviously complex, and the great challenge of this study is to open up a space for shared reflection in order to strengthen support to partner organizations in a way that is appropriate. In addition to the elements mentioned throughout Part 2, this collective work has made it possible to identify ways of improving the quality and relevance of the actions implemented.

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29. <http://cipca.org.bo/noticias/fue-aprobada-la-ley-de-cacao-silvestre-de-baures>
30. <http://cacao.org.bo/normativas>

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➤ Avoiding the trap of idealization

The exercise of analysis naturally contains biases and does not take into account the complexity of social reality very well. In particular, it is possible that certain practices or representations of a given population become idealized or “frozen,” which leads to neglecting their dynamic dimension and potential for transformation. Thus, the aspirations of the villages visited do not always correspond to the partner’s vision and vice versa. One of the organizations expressed this risk in these clear terms: *“The community wants to be like us; we want to be like them.”*

We could observe tensions or divisions during our visits to the indigenous communities regarding the appeal of new technologies, the desire to acquire consumer goods, and the search for new livelihoods. These illustrate the gap between a cosmovision perceived from outside the communities and the diversity of practices and representations observed within the communities. This gap needs to be taken into account to enrich, supplement, and develop the activities. It also raises the question of how to include the diversity of opinions expressed within the group in collective decision-making.



➤ The challenge of inclusiveness for youth and women

Analysis and action research sometimes tend to underestimate internal community tensions. This aspect can be seen in particular in the difficult task of supporting all the villagers. During the field missions, dialog with women and young people brought out positions that are different from those expressed in the larger group—dominated by men—on whether or not they are attached to certain traditions and practices.



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Some partners have also expressed the need for and importance of better incorporating and developing the issue of gender in projects. MASS in India and Caritas Bangladesh have become aware of a strong perception gap between men and women regarding their respective roles, the division of daily tasks, knowledge of the territory and its various resources, and their participation in traditional ceremonies and governance bodies. The issue of the intergenerational transmission of knowledge also comes up regularly as a concern of communities and raises the question of greater inclusion of young people, who are often pulled in the two opposite directions of tradition and modernity.

➤ **Drawing inspiration from integral ecology to develop local actions**

For most partners, the land-rights approach links the environmental, spiritual, and economic dimensions that are fundamental to indigenous peoples. However, the activities of some projects sometimes conflict with the sustainable management of territories, especially of their natural resources. In some projects, activities related to land tenure, agroecology, sustainable livelihoods, and education are not systematically well articulated at local level, even though they can be seen to be consistent in the national strategic vision. The risk in this case is to fall into an approach made up of compartmentalized projects, without a holistic strategy. It is also a point of attention with regard to donors.

➤ Better understanding the different partnership dynamics

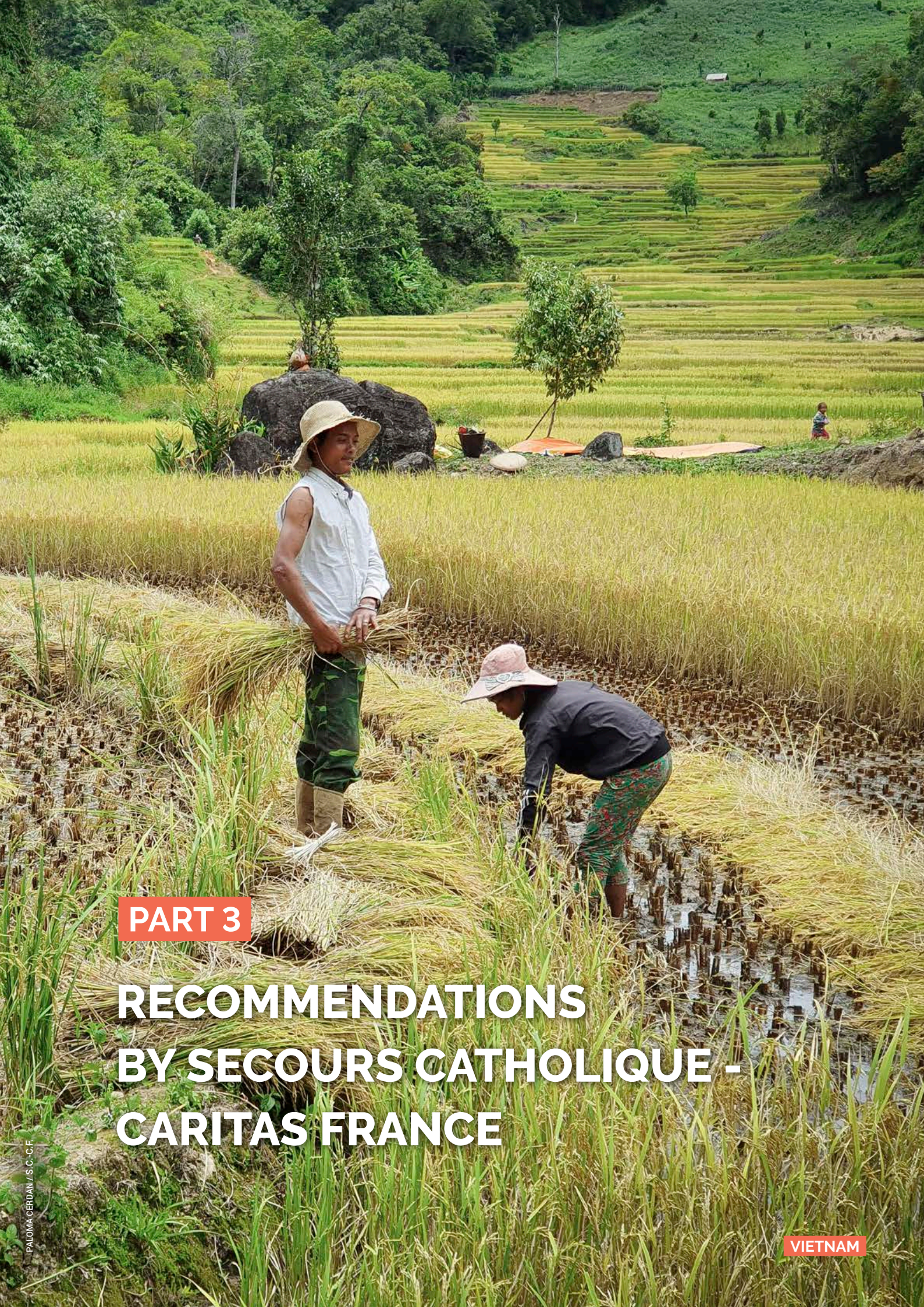
By bringing together the SCCF teams, partners in the field, and members of the indigenous communities met with, this study enabled each stakeholder to question its role within the partnership dynamics. This type of work can lead each party to question their own practices. Some partners indicated that the study has helped them question their own identity and history and to better think about their support strategy. For the SCCF teams, this study made it possible to conduct field missions on subjects that go beyond the strict framework of project and partnership management, and to make it possible to delve deeper into certain subjects—in this case issues of indigenous peoples and their territories. Finally, discussions on this study can guide the SCCF toward a more detailed understanding of the effects of its support actions on both its field partners and on local populations.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO THIS SYSTEM, WHICH IS RUNNING OUT OF STEAM AND EXHAUSTING THE PLANET, NECESSARILY LIES IN A COLLECTIVE REINVENTION OF OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD.

More broadly, the challenges identified are also the challenges of SCCF: this study is an occasion it must seize upon to adapt its practices to the needs and challenges of its partners and of indigenous communities. This time around, the SCCF's support for its partners must be based on these analyses. It will be a matter of putting the exchanges of experience, the good practices, and the networking into concrete form and of making them more

in-depth. At the same time, reflection on all this must be opened up to other partners or regions. The work done as part of this field study could also be a point of support for the work done by the SCCF to help indigenous people in French Guiana, both in its operations and in its advocacy for the recognition of their rights in the French national context.

At a time when we are experiencing not only serious climate and biodiversity crises, but also historic social and economic crises, indigenous peoples are giving us a warning about the threat that the globalized economic system poses to their lifestyles and their territories. Our partners are doing the same. We must also seek inspiration from this situation: the alternative to this system, which is running out of steam and exhausting the planet, necessarily lies in a collective reinvention of our relationship to the world. We have much to learn from the experiences of indigenous communities, their internal tensions and debates, and the proposals that are emerging. Indeed, they—like all of us—feel the same commitment: "...you wouldn't let your mother die..."



PART 3

**RECOMMENDATIONS
BY SECOURS CATHOLIQUE -
CARITAS FRANCE**

Secours Catholique - Caritas France has long carried out advocacy on human rights issues, in particular on rights of indigenous peoples and food security. Its advocacy now incorporates climate change. As member of CLARA (Climate, Land, Ambition and Rights Alliance), we work on the land sector (forests and farmland), which plays a special role in this. While this sector is, on the one hand, a source of greenhouse gas, on the other its carbon sinks (natural or technological) can play a role in mitigating climate change. But some climate policies are not without risks, especially for the rights of indigenous and peasant populations.

This study enabled us to verify with our partners what the main problems are facing the communities we support. The answers have enabled us to draw up policy recommendations for decision-makers at the international, national, and local levels. While the national and local contexts of the eight villages visited are very different—and therefore warrant application of public policies according to those contexts—we also found much in common in the political obstacles encountered by the organizations and the communities they work with.

○ AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

○ Include participation by indigenous peoples in the implementation of international climate and biodiversity policies.

Implementation of the Paris Agreement should take place in the respect of the rights of indigenous peoples. The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, commits all the signatory States to a trajectory of reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, in line with a global warming trajectory of +2°C and as close as possible to +1.5°C compared to the pre-industrial era. At the same time, the States have committed themselves to strengthening adaptation capacities and to promoting resilience to climate change. All these efforts must be made while respecting, promoting, and taking into consideration human rights, and more specifically indigenous peoples, as provided for in the preamble of the Paris Agreement.

○ The World Bank and the regional development banks must ensure that indigenous peoples are effectively consulted in the projects that are financed within their programs.

In almost all cases, development banks have adopted specific policies on including indigenous peoples in the planning phase of projects as well as in the implementation phase. These policies must be rigorously enforced, which is often not the case today. We in fact see forests that act as home to indigenous peoples transformed, under the pretext of "development," into plantations with one or two exogenous species. Such policies not only destroy ecosystems, biodiversity, carbon sinks, and community food sources, but also deform the cultural, spiritual and social functions of these spaces. This is why it is important to take into account all the dimensions of integral ecology, and not be satisfied with just the purely economic dimension, as is often the case with this type of project.



○ AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

- **Recognize and implement legal instruments relating to the rights of indigenous peoples: ratify ILO Convention 169 and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.**

There is an international framework recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, and there are often national frameworks that enshrine the rights of indigenous peoples or local communities in legislation. The first recommendation at the national level is that States recognize indigenous peoples living in their territories and then implement these legal frameworks via national action plans or enshrinement into law. Indeed, we can see that these frameworks are often poorly or not at all applied. This is the case, for example, in India, where the Forest Rights Act (2006) recognized the traditional rights of tribes and forest dwellers over forests and their resources, while at the same time establishing community-based and democratic governance. But what looked like a promising law is applied on only 3% of the territory that could have been concerned.

- **Implement the Paris Agreement at the national level.**
 - Participation by indigenous peoples should be included in the development and implementation of climate policies.

The Paris Agreement is applied to each State through a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and, where applicable, a National Adaptation Plan (NAP). These tools must be developed following the Paris Agreement Implementation Guidelines, which were agreed upon by the States in December 2018. In this way, the countries must report on how citizens have been able to participate in developing the NDCs, including how local communities and indigenous peoples have participated.³¹ In its August 2019 *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*,

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 31. FCCC/PA/CMA/2018/3/Add.1 Decision 4/CMA.1- Annex 1, 4 (i).



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the IPCC scientifically recognized that policies are more likely to succeed if citizens, including indigenous peoples, have been taken into account and consulted.³² NAPs must indicate how traditional and indigenous knowledge is considered in the development of the tool.³³ Such knowledge is extremely valuable when it comes to climate change, as it provides tools that help improve people's resilience.

This is also what is recognized by the IPCC³⁴ and we have seen on the ground. In Myanmar (Kayah State), for example, the communities we met have genuine understanding of local climate issues. Their empirical and shared knowledge enables the villagers to have detailed understanding of the role that forests play in regulating the local climate, including the small cycle of water: the winds and rains are explained by these ecosystems. In Douweku, there are also forests "to preserve the seasons," whose function is to regulate the local climate³⁵ (e.g. cooling air during hot periods).

- **Recognize and protect indigenous territories, to maintain carbon sinks.**

Reaching the Paris Agreement objective to keep global warming below 1.5°C involves finding a balance between sources (greenhouse gas emissions) and carbon sinks. A 2018 report shows that securing indigenous peoples' land rights can secure up to 1,000 GT of CO₂eq in forests where carbon is currently contained.³⁶ In Myanmar, KMSS Loikaw was concerned that climate policies were putting into question crop rotation practices, which are accused of emitting CO₂. It therefore carried out a study in Kayah State, whose findings showed that territories where crop rotation is practiced remain carbon sinks. The carbon stock in the biomass is 74 tons/ha when the land has been fallow for 8 years and 80 tons/ha when it has been fallow for 10 years. By way of comparison, depending on the plant varieties, monocultures sequester between 21 and 55 tons/ha.³⁷

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32. IPCC, *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, C1.4.

33. FCCC/PA/CMA/2018/3/Add.1 Decision 9/CMA.1.

34. IPCC, *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, C1.1.

35. The IPCC report on climate change and land, published in August 2019, highlights the importance of indigenous knowledge for adaptation practices at the local level (IPCC, *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, SPM, C.1.1).

36. CLARA, *Missing Pathways to 1.5°C*, October 2018.

37. KMSS Loikaw, *Livelihood, Land Use and Carbon*, 2017.

States must therefore recognize the rights of indigenous peoples, and especially the right to land and to customary law, which promotes sustainable management of territories. Lands considered "sacred" by indigenous peoples must also be given special recognition. In Vietnam, although the 2019 forestry law does not recognize indigenous cosmology, it does recognize certain customs and habits of the local communities. This allows the customary law of ethnic groups to be recognized in the collective management of their forest areas, which are the ones in great need of preservation in view of current climate and biodiversity issues.

- **Apply the 1.5°C goal as well as human rights and rights of indigenous peoples to all governmental and legislative decisions.**

At a time when we have to slow down global warming and contain it to +1.5°C, all governmental and legislative decisions must be assessed and approved only if they are compatible with the Paris Agreement. This has concrete implications in terms of trade agreements and agricultural policy in particular.

- ⊙ **Stop large-scale projects that threaten the rights of indigenous peoples, ecosystems, and the planet.**

Many so-called development projects have perverse effects on the indigenous populations we met for this study. In Bangladesh, for example, the "social forestry" program has transformed a tropical forest with a rich ecosystem into a plantation, thereby jeopardizing the food sovereignty of the local populations, their culture and spirituality, and biodiversity. Carbon stocks are also much lower in this type of forest compared to primary forests.

In India, near the village of Kuradiphasa, in Odisha State, the mining company BALCO (Bharat Aluminium Company) has set up operations in the forest and built a dam. This has had significant consequences on the territory: deforestation, degradation and destruction of natural resources, drying up of rivers, increase in health problems, and others. Some families, unable to irrigate their village fields and gardens, were forced to leave Kuradiphasa for several years.

- ⊙ **Set up public policies to meet needs in terms of livelihoods.**

In most of the places visited, it is the need to earn a living that pushes people to change their agricultural model, to exploit forest resources more intensively, or to seek opportunities through seasonal migration.

In order to avoid a downward spiral in which farmers are forced to buy seeds and chemical inputs—leading to negative social and environmental consequences as well as to long-term contamination of soil—States must encourage the maintenance of or transition to the agroecological model. This involves regulation of chemical inputs, access of products to local and national markets, and securing land rights.³⁸

- ⊙ **Guarantee the right to free indigenous education.**

In most of the cases observed, payment of school-related costs for children increases the cash needs of indigenous communities. We therefore advocate promoting access to primary, secondary, and higher education, especially for the most vulnerable people, which often include indigenous communities. Educational programs must be designed with cultural and linguistic adaptation to the realities of indigenous peoples. This will help avoid assimilation practices that are often linked to curricula designed for children living in different contexts.

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38. Discussed more in detail in the SCCF publication *Soutenir la transition agroécologique*, October 2018.

⊙ **Adapt public development aid policies to the region.**

As in the case of education, it is essential that public policies for development or humanitarian aid be adapted from a cultural, environmental, food, and social point of view. In Peru, for example, in the Santa Maria de Nieva region, the State has set up a system of toilets and showers in communities to meet a health need. However, the project was implemented without anticipating the rising waters of the local river. In a similar approach, a weekly food-distribution program for some Awajún communities has transformed local eating habits (the food is in cans), and the inhabitants are no longer motivated to cultivate their land. As there is no waste-recovery system, waste piles up, polluting soil and water. The fact that nutritional problems in children have been reported is noteworthy given that SAIPE considers that the indigenous culture system enabled balanced combinations that covered all the community's nutritional needs.

○ **AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

⊙ **Provide political space for territorial autonomy that allows for participation by local and in particular indigenous people, and recognize customary rights.**

⊙ **Enhance the role of local stakeholders, particularly that of the civil society organizations that support communities.**

Local authorities must respect international and national legislative frameworks and make indigenous peoples partners in decision-making. To do so, they should establish processes of consultation and participatory democracy.

⊙ **Protect the rights of environmental advocates (at the individual and organizational level).**

Environmental and human rights advocates are targeted in many countries around the world, particularly when it comes to defending the right to land. The persecution, threats, and murders they are subject to are totally unacceptable. These advocates are acting for everyone's good, by protecting the earth to fight climate change, protecting the environment and biodiversity, and enabling us to survive on the planet. It is the responsibility of States to enable these advocates to act freely and safely. States must also address the sources of the problem by guaranteeing consultation rights, fighting impunity, and ensuring that justice is done for the victims. ■



Bangladesh



Caritas Bangladesh

<https://caritasbd.org>

India



Manav Adhikar Seva Samiti
(MASS)

massodisha@gmail.com

Myanmar



Karuna Mission Social
Solidarity (KMSS) Loikaw
<https://www.kmss.org.mm>

Vietnam



Community Entrepreneur
Development Institute (CENDI)
<http://cendiglobal.org>

Bolivia



Centro de Investigación
y Promoción del
Campesinado (CIPCA)

<https://cipca.org.bo>

Peru



Servicio Agropecuario
para la Investigación
y Promoción Económica
(SAIPE) Peru

direccion.saipe@gmail.com



**ENSEMBLE,
CONSTRUIRE
UN MONDE JUSTE
ET FRATERNEL**

dir.internationale@secours-catholique.org



A COLLECTIVE APPROACH LED BY SEVEN PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS IN ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA

