



"Indigenous women forging a more egalitarian future in the context of Covid-19."

International Women's Day Monday, March 8, 2021

10:00 am Central America

Background

Now more than ever, the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women underscores the need to move forward at an accelerated pace, with evidence-based laws and policies, sufficient resources, implementation mechanisms, and accountability to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Only with women's full participation and a gender perspective in crisis response policies, as well as longer-term development policies, will we be able to build back better.

Before the arrival of COVID-19, more than 23 million indigenous women and girls in the region faced discrimination and inequality in multiple areas of their daily lives. The pandemic intensified these aspects. Despite this extremely challenging reality, the resilience of indigenous women and their organizations and networks in the pandemic context is remarkable. They were the first to put in place community strategies to cope with the pandemic, establish health fences, implement initiatives to prevent violence, facilitate food supply, and adapt their productive enterprises to be sustainable during and after the crisis.

Women's empowerment and their full and equal participation in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making processes and access to power, are fundamental to equality, development, and peace. Increasing indigenous women's participation in public life, strengthening, and sustaining their crucial role in environmental defense, territories, human rights, and collective rights is essential. Driving and consolidating tangible progress in these areas is critical to fulfill the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to ensure that recovery from the crisis leaves no one behind, especially no indigenous women and girls.

An essential aspect to consider is violence against indigenous women, which requires urgently implementing prevention and eradication strategies and formulating policies and national and global action plans that incorporate the indigenous vision. Regionally, actions should be taken to implement the Ibero-American Action Plan for the rights of indigenous peoples. One of its objectives is creating national programs for the prevention and attention of the various forms of rights violations suffered by women, including racism, discrimination, criminalization, trafficking, among others.

This year's International Women's Day 2021 is being commemorated under the theme "*Women Leaders: For an Equal Future in the World of Covid-19*," highlighting the enormous efforts of women and girls worldwide to forge an equal future and recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. It is also in line with the priority theme of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "*Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life and the elimination of violence, to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*."

It also aligns with the emblematic campaign *Equality Generation*, which demands equal decision-making in all life's sphere, equal pay, splitting unpaid care and domestic work, ending violence against women and girls, and responsive health care services.

Indigenous women worldwide and especially in our region have shown great resilience, responsiveness, and collective leadership to face the pandemic's challenges and prepare and implement concrete actions to address their peoples, communities, and families' socioeconomic needs.

Although the states have recently made normative and institutional advances for Indigenous Peoples, this has been less evident concerning indigenous women, which means that there is still a long and complex road ahead to create the desired more egalitarian world.

In this context, FILAC and UN Women have prepared the report "*Indigenous Women's Rights 25 years after the Beijing Declaration*" on the general situation of indigenous women in the region, emphasizing the legal and institutional frameworks that regulate it.¹ For its part, FILAC has been systematizing and disseminating actions of indigenous women's resilience in the context of the pandemic and notable cases of collective empowerment of indigenous women throughout the continent.

Supporting the strengthening of these efforts is critical because the empowerment of indigenous women demonstrates the enormous capacity they possess, not only to solve their problems but also to be agents of change for society's benefit.

The commemoration of International Women's Day 2021 is a forum to disseminate the materials that provide relevant inputs on indigenous women's reality and perspectives while continuing to join efforts between international agencies, governments, and indigenous organizations towards the realization of a more egalitarian future even in times of pandemic.

¹ The report is available at <https://www.ordpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Informe-Regional-Mujeres-indigenas-Derechos-Intercult-1.pdf>

Indigenous women's advocacy through the emblematic MILAC program

The Ibero-American Action Plan for the Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples aims to create the right conditions for realizing indigenous peoples' individual and collective rights with an intercultural, intergenerational, and gender equality approach. The action plan's fourth objective mentions the visibility and strengthening of the whole and effective participation of indigenous women in the generation of public policies aimed at special attention to and prevention of the various forms of violence of which they are victims.

FILAC through its flagship program "Indigenous Women of Latin America" (MILAC), integrated by the most important indigenous women's networks in the region: The Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA); the Network of Indigenous Women for Biodiversity (RMIB); the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico (AMICAM), the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA); the Indigenous Council of Central America (CICA), the International Forum of Indigenous Women (FIMI); the Network of Indigenous Youth, the Global Network of Indigenous Persons with Disabilities, the Andean Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI); considers it essential to promote intercultural dialogue by establishing with indigenous women a space for dialogue of free expression in which they can propose recommendations and concerns, as well as the development of a proposal for advocacy as a result of the analysis of the conclusions of the study Indigenous Women's Rights 25 years after the Beijing Declaration prepared by the Regional Observatory for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - ORDPI.