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*The Regional Indigenous Peoples' Programme is an initiative of UNDP, working in Asia-Pacific to foster and develop dialogue on indigenous peoples' rights and development. The Programme works with national governments, indigenous peoples' organizations and communities and in partnership with UNDP Country Offices in involved countries.*

## SUMMARY

The Regional Indigenous Peoples Programme (RIPP) is an initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) working to promote dialogue between indigenous peoples, governments and other relevant parties throughout Asia-Pacific. The programme was established in 2004, and works within the framework of UNDP's Policy of Engagement with Indigenous Peoples. The unique position of UNDP as a neutral and trusted partner is the comparative advantage that UNDP brings to work with indigenous peoples:

“UNDP’s coordinating role at the country level, its human development paradigm, advocacy of democratic governance, and policy of mainstreaming human rights positions makes it a key partner for pursuing a more holistic approach to development. Moreover, UNDP’s country presence and the relationship of trust it has with governments and civil society partners enables UNDP to play a unique role in bringing together different stakeholders in development processes.”

*UNDP Policy of Engagement with Indigenous Peoples(2001)*

Within this niche, UNDP additionally recognizes that regional programmes play a value-added role to national initiatives and the work possible through Country Offices by:

- ✓ Introducing policy options, and innovative tools and methodologies for adoption at national levels
- ✓ Fostering partnerships and building / strengthening regional knowledge networks
- ✓ Undertaking training and capacity building and regional advocacy
- ✓ Sharing of 'best practices' and comparative experiences
- ✓ Supporting regional integration, policy coordination, harmonization, agreements and standards.

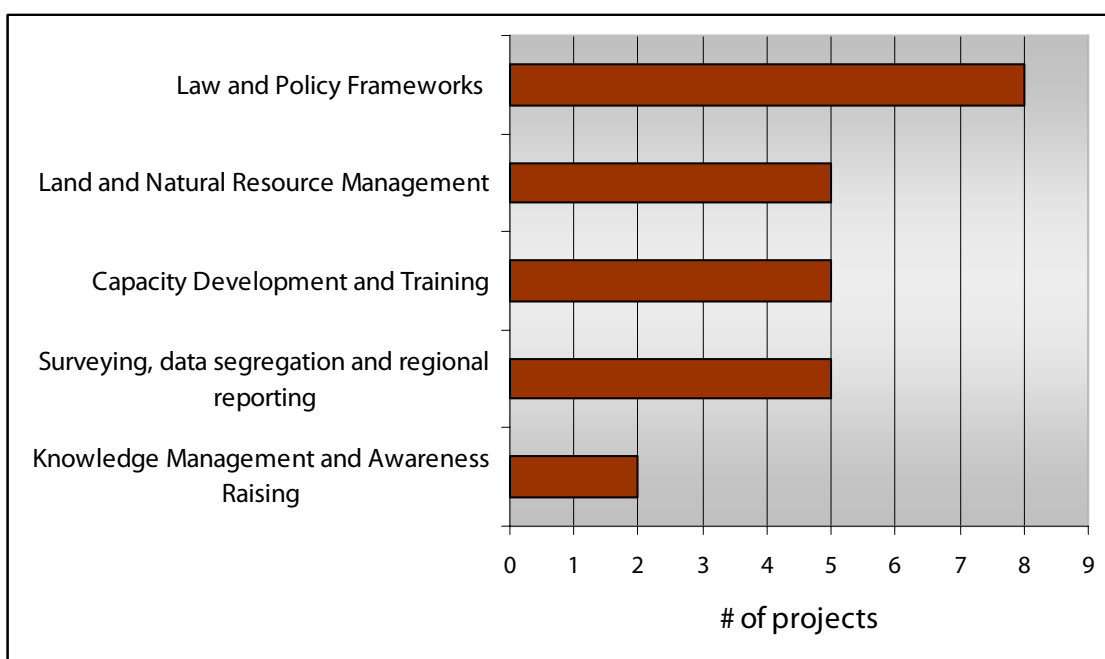
Working from this strategic advantage, UNDP-RIPP has developed a broad and diverse programme of work, in full consultation with indigenous peoples, governments and other partners. This note provides some key illustrative examples of the work that has been achieved in the programme, and of work that is planned for the future. Detailed information regarding activities and work areas of the Regional Indigenous Peoples’ Programme is available at: <http://regionalcentrebangkok.undp.or.th/practices/governance/ripp/>

Further information about the work of UNDP globally on indigenous peoples is available through [www.undp.org/cso](http://www.undp.org/cso)

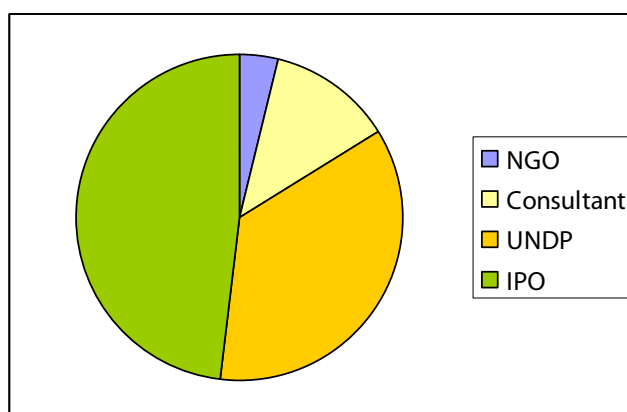
## OUR PARTNERS AND PROJECTS

Projects and partnership are ongoing with indigenous peoples' organizations, UNDP Country Offices, governments and other UN agencies. This complements the policy advisory services provided by the programme to governments and country offices.

Full project data sheets are available for projects. The graph below shows the thematic spread of the projects and partnerships established, with a clear focus on governance and law and policy. All areas of work will be extended and developed further.



Partnerships with a range of organizations and sectors are forged, to build capacity of indigenous peoples' organizations while simultaneously providing a space for dialogue in a neutral area.



## **OUR APPROACH**

### **Human Rights Based Approach**

In keeping with evolving national and international consensus on indigenous peoples' rights and development needs and the broadening scope of the concept and content of development, UNDP-RIPP is underpinned by rights-based development approaches to poverty reduction.

The Millennium Declaration recognizes the importance of human rights not only by re-affirming them as fundamental values, but also treating them throughout the Declaration as both crosscutting and category specific. We see in the Declaration the most explicit linkage of human rights with poverty reduction, stated as:

'we will spare no efforts to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.'

### **Governance**

UNDP-RIPP seeks to use governance systems and processes to promote the rights and development choices of indigenous peoples.

"Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources".

### **Strategic Partnerships**

As a programme geared towards increasing space for dialogue and discussion on issues facing indigenous peoples, UNDP-RIPP works in close partnership with indigenous peoples, national governments and civil society at all stages. RIPP also emphasizes inclusion of other regional and global organizations – whether financing institutions, bilateral development funders or international civil society in this endeavor.

Key partners in the region include regional and national indigenous peoples' organizations, bilateral donors and the International Financial Institutions such as the Asian Development Bank. Within the UN system UNDP-RIPP partners with the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the OHCHR on pioneering the Human Rights Based Approach, with the ILO on regional programmes and other UN agencies. A key focus is to expand our partnerships to encompass other interested organizations.

## OUR WORK

### Law and Policy Frameworks

Working from a governance perspective, UNDP-RIPP seeks law and policy frameworks as an essential part of any effective, sustained change. Working on a national level in partnership with government UNDP-RIPP seeks to ensure that indigenous peoples are involved and consulted regarding policies affecting their lives and communities. This includes also local governance structures, and the extent to which the current structures allow for, marginalize or promote the inclusion of indigenous peoples.

The second main legal and political structure of key importance to indigenous peoples which the programme is looking at is the justice systems in participating countries. This includes the interface between formal and informal justice system, inclusion or exclusion of indigenous peoples in the formal justice system and systems of customary law and governance.

#### National laws and policies

By invitation of the government and in partnership with indigenous peoples, UNDP-RIPP is assisting two countries with review and/or reformulation of national laws and policies relevant to indigenous peoples – Cambodia and Indonesia.

#### **Cambodia**

UNDP-RIPP and the UNDP Country Office are leading the partnership of international agencies supporting the Royal Government of Cambodia in finalizing the Policy on Indigenous Peoples. Further, through partnership with indigenous peoples' networks and NGOs in country, UNDP-RIPP is supporting analysis of the forest laws and national protected area laws – both passed by the legislature and requiring regulations to come into force. The link between forest law, protected area law and the draft policy on indigenous peoples is of fundamental importance to the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples in Cambodia, and will create the framework for all indigenous development in that country in the future.

#### **Indonesia**

UNDP-RIPP and the UNDP County Office are working in partnership with a national alliance of indigenous peoples, AMAN, and the Government of Indonesia to conduct a review of all national laws relevant to indigenous peoples, with reformulation planned for inappropriate or harmful laws and regulations.

Relevant to national law and policy frameworks is the work that RIPP is doing on local governance structures. In partnership with UNDP colleagues, RIPP is examining the extent to which local governing structures include, promote or disadvantage indigenous peoples.

### **Access to Justice**

In cooperation with the Asian Regional Governance Programme and the Asia-Pacific Gender Mainstreaming Programme, we have been supporting a series of studies into access to the justice system by vulnerable groups. Specific to indigenous peoples, studies have been conducted in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Philippines and Thailand. Each of these studies was undertaken in partnership with indigenous peoples and seeks to reveal, in a participatory and empowering process, the root causes for legal marginalization of indigenous peoples.

## **Natural Resource Management, Land Tenure and Resource Rights**

The issues of land use, natural resource management and access to/control over resources are consistently raised by indigenous peoples throughout Asia as a key concern facing their peoples and communities. RIPP is working on this issue through a regional research and analysis programme assessing government policy and indigenous practices on NRM in four countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand. This will culminate in a regional publication, and result in policy recommendations and potential pilot projects of cooperative or collaborative management.

### **NRM Participatory Research**

Through local, district, regional and national consultations, RIPP and partners are assessing the relationship between government policies and indigenous practices on natural resource management. Consultations with indigenous peoples and with local and national governments reveal common themes or points of potential conflict and possible cooperation:

- The importance of local governance systems in mitigating conflict;
- The presence and effectiveness of structures of support for NRM by indigenous peoples;
- The need for inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation on indigenous rights and resource management within the national governments

The findings of these studies were fed into the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Brazil, held in April 2006. The studies will be collated into a regional publication detailing policy recommendations.

## Data Segregation

Very few governments in the Asia-Pacific region collect ethnically disaggregated data when conducting national information gathering exercises such as for censuses, electoral rolls etc. The result, a lack in any real accurate information about the development circumstances of indigenous peoples in the region, was identified by the UNPFII in its 4<sup>th</sup> Session as a key obstacle to effective work to address the issues facing indigenous peoples. The lack of data has the effect of effectively 'hiding' development indicators for indigenous peoples, or not collecting them in such manner as to make the context indigenous-sensitive. The approach of UNDP-RIPP to addressing this issue on a regional level in Asia-Pacific is two fold:

- (i) strategies to encourage governments to give due attention to the challenge of disaggregated data of indigenous segments of their national populations; and
- (j) actual indicators that we are developing through our programme

Through the implementation of these activities, UNDP-RIPP has recognized that significant challenges remain for better data collection and disaggregation techniques to be adopted by countries and governments in the region. By taking a strategic and analytical approach to the underlying causes of low-grade national data collection, UNDP-RIPP seeks to provide tools and support to address these underlying causes.

### **Mapping of Indigenous Peoples**

Another strategy UNDP-RIPP uses to address lack of disaggregated data is to conduct surveys of indigenous peoples in the region. This mapping exercise is undertaken through partnerships with indigenous organizations and communities. This is complemented by data surveying through desk reviews. A partnered survey has been undertaken in Nepal and data surveying in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam.

### **Developing Data Collection Tools for Government Use**

RIPP is supporting a pilot project in three districts in the Philippines. Our partner, TEBTEBBA Foundation is working with the National Statistics Office to develop new tools for survey and census collection – tools which will include both disaggregation of indigenous populations, and specific indicators to reflect the development circumstances of indigenous peoples vis-à-vis the rest of the population.

The indicators formulated through this project will be shared. It is hoped that the development of these tools will lead to national statistics offices in the region adopting the tools and survey techniques.

## Capacity Development

Capacity development of all partners and stakeholders in the programme is a key element of the work of RIPP. Through training programmes, workshops, exchange visits and the establishment of virtual e-networks and other strategies, RIPP aims to increase awareness and knowledge of the issues facing indigenous peoples.

### **Indigenous Women and Decision Making**

On a national level, with local partner indigenous organizations and local facilitators, UNDP-RIPP is collaborating with the Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact (AIPP) on a regional series of training events for indigenous women on decision making. This focuses on power structures, development processes and empowerment.

This is in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Gender Mainstreaming Programme and is a multi-year experience and lessons learnt exchange for indigenous women throughout the region.

### **Development policies and frameworks**

Many of key international financial institutions, important funders of development initiatives in the region - have established over the past decades policies and guidelines to guide their work with indigenous peoples.

The process of applying, monitoring and reviewing these guidelines and policies is an on-going one, and reflects a long-term dialogue. RIPP is supporting strengthening this dialogue between IFI's, key development financing agencies and indigenous peoples through advocacy and training.

### **HRBA Training and Advocacy**

A planned series of trainings on Human Rights Based Approaches to development, and dialogue with key international financial institutions is a major initiative for RIPP. The training process, and the development of an indigenous specific training manual on HRBA and the policies of the IFI's, is being guided by a task force of indigenous leaders and organizations. The task force works through a virtual e-network, hosted through UNDP RCB.

The third major capacity development initiative in the work of RIPP is a leadership training initiative for youth and young leaders in Asia Pacific.

### **Young Asian Indigenous Leaders**

A training event for young Asian leaders in governance, held in Chiang Mai Thailand, saw a group of young indigenous leaders from throughout the region have a chance to exchange knowledge and ideas.

These 12 young indigenous leaders joined with other young leaders from government, media, non-government organizations and academia, to discuss leadership challenges in the region, and to strengthen their skills as leaders in the future. Through this initial training event, they decided to establish a network among themselves, with a virtual web base hosted through UNDP RCB.

An outcome of this training course is the development of a national level project to localize the training manuals in Bangladesh, through the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility of UNDP. The localization project has been designed by a group of five young indigenous leaders who are alumni of the initial training held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Other such courses are in progress.

### **Knowledge Sharing**

UNDP-RIPP is committed to open and transparent work practices and sharing of knowledge and information. We seek to provide clear and detailed information through our website, through established e-bulletins and networks and through regular reporting. Please contact us for further information on any activities described here, or with other queries and questions.

## **UNDP and Indigenous Peoples A Policy of Engagement**

UNDP is mandated to address the development needs of the world's poorest and most vulnerable, through the five key practice areas of Democratic Governance; Poverty Reduction; HIV/AIDS; Crisis Prevention and Recovery; and Energy and Environment.

In 2001 UNDP adopted a Policy of Engagement with Indigenous Peoples. The Policy is in direct response to the disproportionately vulnerable situations facing many indigenous peoples, and the need for constructive dialogue with indigenous peoples when devising development activities affecting them.

This Policy of Engagement provides the framework to guide UNDP's work in the area of indigenous issues. It is built on the recognition that indigenous peoples must be engaged in, and in ownership of, activities concerning their rights and development.

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The Regional initiative on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Development is part of the regional programming of UNDP through the Regional Centre in Bangkok. The RCB Provides advice and technical support to the UNDP country offices within the region, covering some 25 countries in Asia and Pacific

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