

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CAMEROON

A guide for media professionals



International
Labour
Office

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES **IN CAMEROON**

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List of abbreviations

ACHPR : African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

CEACR : Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations

CED : Centre for Environment and Development

CNUDHD-CA : United Nations Centre for Democracy and Human Rights in Central Africa

ECOSOC : Economic and Social Council

ILO : International Labour Organization

IP : Indigenous peoples

IFP : Indigenous forest peoples

ISP : Indigenous savannah peoples

OHCHR : Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNDRIP : United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Preface

This booklet is intended to serve as a tool for assisting media professionals covering indigenous peoples' issues. It is the result of a number of workshops organized on this subject — at the ILO's initiative — in Yaoundé in 2014 and 2015 bringing together media professionals and indigenous peoples' representatives. In this context, the participating media professionals have committed themselves to promoting the rights of indigenous peoples.

Drawing attention to these issues is particularly timely, as concerns for indigenous peoples' rights and well-being are an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to tackle poverty and inequality by empowering groups experiencing socio-economic vulnerability. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda forcefully calls for measures to ensure that no one is left behind.

In Cameroon, the Government's commitment to promote the rights of indigenous peoples demonstrates a political will, the realization of which requires a contribution from each and everyone, in order to ensure that the country succeeds in its efforts to attain respect for human rights for all, including for its indigenous peoples.

This publication is the outcome of fruitful exchanges between the actors concerned, and provides a simple and practical tool that is easy to consult. It attempts to create a link between media professionals and indigenous peoples' communities, which will enable them to work together in full respect of the culture of indigenous peoples, with a view to doing away with stereotypes, misunderstandings and differences. It is by working together that journalists and indigenous communities will contribute actively towards consolidating the body of national law incorporating the rights of indigenous peoples recognized in international instruments.

The publication is the result of cooperation between various parts of the International Labour Office, namely the Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, the International Labour Standards Department, the Office in Yaoundé, as well as the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa. The initiative benefited from the support of the European Union. ■

Vera Lucia Paquete-Perdigao
Director, ILO Office in Yaoundé



Traditional dwelling of forest indigenous peoples, called «Mongulu»

Introduction

Cameroon is among the countries concerned by the issue of indigenous peoples. Out of a population estimated to exceed 20 million inhabitants, some ten per cent have been identified as indigenous peoples, on the basis of work carried out by experts at both the international and regional level in accordance with pre-established criteria. These peoples are divided up into two major groups — the forest peoples commonly known as «Pygmies»¹ and the Mbororo.

The indigenous peoples in Cameroon experience very similar difficulties but live under different conditions. In order to protect indigenous peoples, the international community has adopted texts, some of which are binding. At the national level, the Government of Cameroon has demonstrated a political will to address the problems faced

by these peoples: it has voted in favour of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Since 2008, it has officially commemorated the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on 9 August every year, and it adheres to human rights mechanisms that issue observations and recommendations on indigenous issues.

Despite the progress made in Cameroon and in a number of Central African countries,² the fact remains that the situation is far from the one envisaged by the basic principles laid down in the relevant international instruments. This guide has been designed to coordinate efforts and to provide media professionals with an information and awareness-raising tool that can support them in their future activities dealing with indigenous peoples. ■

¹ The term «Pygmy» is considered perjorative by the peoples concerned, who prefer to be referred to by the names of their sub-groups (Baka, Bakola, Bagyéli and Bedzang).

² The Central African Republic (CAR) ratified the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) in 2010, and Congo has already enacted national legislation concerning the rights of indigenous peoples.

PART



1 Overall situation of indigenous peoples in Cameroon

IDENTIFYING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The international community has not adopted a definition of the concept of « indigenous peoples ». The position of most of the international organizations entrusted with addressing the rights of indigenous peoples — including on the basis of existing international legal instruments, such as the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) — is that a strict definition of indigenous peoples is neither necessary nor desirable. It is much more relevant and constructive to try to describe the main characteristics allowing the identification of these peoples.

The debate on determining « who the indigenous peoples in Africa are » has made significant strides forward in the past few years, particularly thanks to the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). The Commission understands the concept of indigenous peoples as extending beyond the issue of historical precedent, in order to be able to examine the situation of marginalization with which these people are confronted, as well as their specific characteristics.³ Consistent with ILO Convention No. 169, the Commission proposes that the principle of self-identification should be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups of indigenous populations.⁴

³ Cf. Advisory opinion of the ACHPR on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Accra, May 2007.

⁴ See the report of the ACHPR Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa, 2005, p. 93, et. seq. See: http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/African_Commission_book.pdf

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Overall situation of indigenous peoples in Cameroon

ILO Convention No. 169 contains a combination of subjective and objective elements, which are used jointly to identify these peoples (Article 1). It sets out to describe, and not to define, the peoples to which it applies. The objective elements allowing for the identification of indigenous people are the following:

- historical continuity (they are pre-conquest/colonization societies);
- territorial connection (their ancestors already inhabited the country or region);
- distinct social, economic, cultural and political institutions (they have retained some or all of their own institutions).

In addition, the Convention attaches considerable importance to whether a given people considers itself to be indigenous under the Convention, and whether a person feels that she or he belongs to this people.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) adopts a similar approach, by describing indigenous people and making reference to characteristics attributed to them: distinctiveness; dispossession of land, territories and natural resources; historical and pre-colonial presence in certain territories; cultural and linguistic characteristics; and political and legal marginalization.

The Report of the Working Group of Experts of the ACHPR on Indigenous Populations/Communities⁵ lists the following characteristics as being possible criteria for identifying indigenous peoples in Africa :

- their ways of life differ considerably from those of the dominant society;
- their cultures are under threat, in some areas on the verge of extinction;

⁵ The advisory opinion of the ACHPR on the UNDRIP gives reasons why it prefers the word «peoples» to «population» (pp. 3 and 4). The words are used interchangeably here.

Traditional dinner in the forest



- the survival of their particular way of life depends on their recognition and access and rights to their traditional land and natural resources;
- indigenous peoples suffer from discrimination as they are regarded as less developed and less advanced than other more dominant sectors of society;
- they often live in inaccessible and geographically isolated areas, and suffer from various forms of marginalization, both politically and socially;
- they are subject to domination and exploitation within national political and economic structures that are commonly designed to reflect the interests and activities of the national majority;
- they identify themselves as being indigenous populations.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CAMEROON

The Constitution of Cameroon of 18 January 1996 states that: «The State shall ensure the protection of minorities and shall preserve the rights of indigenous populations in accordance with the law». Given the Constitution's lack of precision as to the concept of «indigenous populations», the Government of Cameroon launched a study in 2009, which, once it is completed, should make it possible to identify groups considered as indigenous peoples within the meaning of the United Nations system.⁶ Taking as a basis the criteria for identifying indigenous peoples contained in ILO Convention No. 169 and the Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities,⁷ the groups that can be considered indigenous in Cameroon are : the Mbororo nomadic pastoralists and the hunter-gatherers, also called forest peoples or commonly «Pygmies».

⁶ The study is in its second stage.

⁷ Cf. pp. 19 et seq.

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Overall situation of indigenous peoples in Cameroon

Mbororo woman



The Mbororo

There are no official statistics on the Mbororo peoples in Cameroon. However, this group is estimated today to account for less than two million persons. Traditionally they were nomads, constantly on the move from one place to another to find pastures for their herds. Today, a number of them are transhumant herdsman, who migrate on a seasonal basis but return to their temporary dwelling. The Mbororo live throughout Cameroon, but they are mostly to be found in the West, East, and Northwest regions, and in the northern part of the country.

The forest peoples

In Cameroon, the forest peoples are the Baka, Bakola or Bagyéli and the Bedzang. They are called forest peoples because they were the original inhabitants of the forests in Cameroon.

While no official statistical data is available, it is estimated that the Baka, who are the largest group, number between 70,000 and 100,000 persons. They live in the eastern and southern parts of the country (Departments of Boumba-et-Ngoko, Haut-Nyong and Kadey). The Bakola or Bagyéli account for between 10,000 and 30,000 persons, and they live in the south of the country — more specifically in Akom II, Bipindi, Kribi, Campo, Ma'an and Lolodorf. There are fewer Bedzang, who number less than a thousand people, and they live in the northwest of the Mbam-et-Kim Division, on the Tikar Plain and also in Messondo in the Centre region.

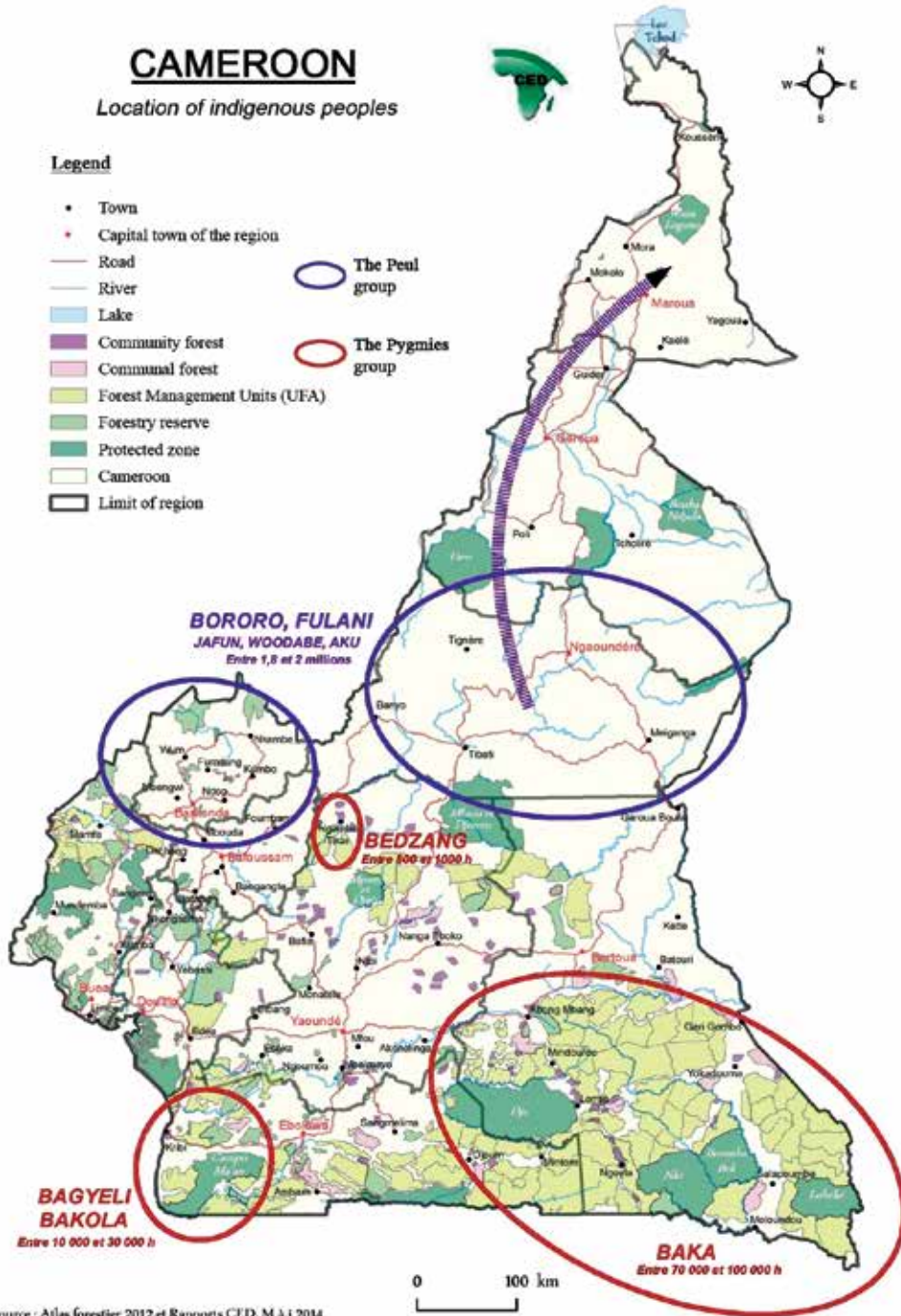
The Baka, Bagyéli and Bedzang are traditionally nomadic peoples, living from hunting and gathering. But their activities are restricted today because they are being subjected to pressure on their ancestral lands on account of forestry and mining operations, as well as conservation activities and agribusiness.

CAMEROON

Location of indigenous peoples

Legend

- Town
 - Capital town of the region
 - Road
 - River
 - Lake
 - Community forest
 - Communal forest
 - Forest Management Units (UFA)
 - Forestry reserve
 - Protected zone
 - Cameroon
 - Limit of region
-  The Peul group
 -  The Pygmies group



Source : Atlas forestier 2012 et Rapports CED, M.L.J 2014

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Overall situation of indigenous peoples in Cameroon

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND MINORITIES

There is no specific definition of « minorities » and a number of criteria may be used to describe them : self-identification; belonging to the same ethnic group; numerical criterion; sharing of a common language, belief and culture; and not being in a dominant position in the country. Indigenous peoples and minorities both are often the victims of discrimination, but instruments concerning minorities do not address the specific needs of indigenous persons.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CAMEROON

Like their peers in the Central African region, the indigenous peoples in Cameroon have to face numerous challenges:

- they suffer from discrimination, stigmatization and marginalization in so far as their level of participation in decision-making processes at both the community and national level is still low;
- their villages and traditional social institutions, especially those of the Baka, Bagyéli and Bedzang peoples, have no official recognition whatsoever;
- their lands come under pressure because of forestry and mining interests, conservation activities and agribusiness, which can restrict their access to the natural resources (products of hunting, gathering and grazing) upon which they depend for their livelihood;

Bagyéli dancers



- their land is sometimes illegally seized, including for large scale agricultural production;
- limited access to the profits derived from the natural resources in their immediate vicinity;
- limited access to natural resources;
- a low level of recognition of their rights and interests in laws, policies and programmes;
- their work is exploited and they lack access to the labour market;
- a high infant mortality rate;
- women from indigenous communities are victims of a double marginalization (see p. 20 below);
- conflicts between the indigenous peoples and their Bantu neighbours (disputes between pastoralists and crop farmers);
- indigenous children have limited access to education that is totally free and adapted to their culture;
- school curricula take no account of the specific characteristics of indigenous peoples, and neither are these people involved in their planning;
- stereotypes against them still persist because they have been identified as indigenous peoples;
- they are scarcely consulted and involved in decision-making processes that concern or might affect them. ■

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Bagyéli dancers



2 International and regional legal instruments protecting indigenous peoples

THE ILO DISCRIMINATION (EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATION) CONVENTION, 1958 (No.111)

Convention No. 111 was ratified by Cameroon on 13 May 1988. It provides an important framework to promote the right of indigenous men and women to equality and decent work in the spirit of ILO Convention No. 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Convention No. 111 defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation. It allows ratifying States, after consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, to extend the list of distinctions, exclusions or preferences that might nullify or impair equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation. The Convention excludes from the scope of discrimination any distinctions, exclusions or preferences in respect of a particular job based on its inherent requirements, as well as special measures of protection or assistance provided for under international labour standards. It also defines the concepts of «employment and occupation», by specifying that they include access to vocational training, access to employment and to particular occupations, and terms and conditions of employment.

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International and regional legal

instruments protecting indigenous peoples

Equal access of indigenous peoples to decent work that meets their needs and aspirations is, indeed, a matter of human rights, but it is also vital to achieving national and international development objectives.

The value of the work carried out by indigenous peoples generally goes unrecognized. The work carried out is sometimes paid in kind through bartering, which deprives them of the opportunity to give their opinion on the value of their work.

Indigenous peoples consider the fact that they have limited access to the land and natural resources they once owned, lived on or used, and that they can no longer fully carry out their traditional activities, amounts to discrimination. Women belonging to these communities are victims of double discrimination. They are discriminated against as women, and also because they are indigenous.

THE INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES CONVENTION, 1989 (No. 169)⁸

In 1989, the International Labour Organization adopted Convention No. 169 on a tripartite basis, and to this day it is the main binding instrument protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. The adoption of this Convention represents a consensus reached by ILO tripartite constituents on the rights of indigenous peoples and the responsibility of governments to protect these rights. To date, it has been ratified by 22 member States, including one African country: the Central African Republic. In Cameroon, advocacy activities are being undertaken to encourage the Government to ratify this Convention.

Convention No. 169 requires ratifying States to introduce legal and institutional reforms in order to adapt national laws and institutions to its provisions.

⁸ In addition to Conventions Nos. 111 and 169, a range of other international labour standards are relevant for addressing indigenous issues. These include: the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122); the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202); the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204).

Promote access of indigenous peoples to appropriate education

Measures shall be taken to ensure that members of indigenous peoples have the opportunity to acquire education at all levels on at least an equal footing with the rest of the national community (Part VI of Convention No. 169). ■

School classroom in the forest



Ratification also implies that the ratifying State accepts that the ILO supervisory mechanisms monitor the instrument's implementation.

ILO Convention No. 169 calls upon States to promote the full realization of the social, economic and cultural rights of these peoples with strict respect for their social and cultural identity, their customs and traditions and their institutions, while ensuring that they enjoy the full measure of these fundamental rights and freedoms without hindrance or discrimination. Special measures must be adopted as appropriate for safeguarding the persons, institutions, property, labour, cultures and environment of these peoples.

Convention No. 169 requires that governments consult the persons concerned whenever they consider legislative or administrative measures that may affect them directly. Consultations must be undertaken in good faith and with the objective of obtaining agreement or consent.⁹

« (...) the Convention particularly emphasizes the need to consult under certain circumstances, including prior to exploration or exploitation of sub-surface resources and prior to relocation and land alienation (...). This does not mean that indigenous peoples have special rights but that given their situation, special measures

⁹ Convention No. 169 does not provide indigenous peoples with a veto right. See ILO: Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), Handbook for ILO tripartite constituents (Geneva, 2013), p.16.

Supervision of ratified international labour Conventions

States who have ratified international labour Conventions, such as Conventions Nos. 111 or 169, undertake to submit regular reports on their implementation to the ILO. These reports are prepared at the national level in consultation with the employers' and workers' organizations. They are then examined by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), which in turn addresses to the States concerned comments seeking to guide the implementing of the provisions of the Convention.

The CEACR's comments are accessible to the general public at the website : www.ilo.org/normlex.

For example, the CEACR, in 2014, addressed comments to Cameroon in connection with Convention No. 111 about pilot projects for the education of Baka children in the east of the country. Similarly, in the case of the Central African Republic - the first African country to have ratified Convention No. 169 - the ILO supervisory bodies are closely monitoring the situation of indigenous peoples under this Convention, on the basis of reports submitted by the Government. ■

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What are appropriate procedures for consultation ?

«The requirement that consultations should take place through appropriate procedures implies that consultations should take place in a climate of mutual trust. In general, Governments need to recognize representative organizations and both parties should endeavour to reach an agreement, conduct genuine and constructive negotiations, avoid unjustified delays, comply with the agreements which are concluded and implement them in good faith. Governments also need to ensure that indigenous peoples have all relevant information and that it can be fully understood by them. Sufficient time must be given to allow indigenous peoples to engage their own decision-making processes and participate effectively in decisions taken, in a manner consistent with their cultural and social traditions. Thus, consultation often means establishing an intercultural dialogue ». ■

ILO: Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), Handbook for ILO tripartite constituents (Geneva, 2013), p. 15 .

International and regional legal instruments protecting indigenous peoples

for consultation and participation are required, to safeguard their rights within the framework of a democratic State. The collective nature of indigenous peoples' rights and the need to safeguard their cultures and livelihoods are among the reasons why governments should adopt special measures for their consultation and participation in decision-making ». ¹⁰

THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (UNDRIP)

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September 2007.

Cameroon, like the vast majority of African countries, voted in favour of the adoption of this text. As a Declaration, the instrument does not have the binding force of a treaty. However, it was adopted by the UN General Assembly and should be taken into account by all UN member States in good faith.

The Declaration establishes minimum standards for the respect of indigenous people's rights including regarding self-determination, right to land, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned and occupied, and the guarantee of recognition and legal protection by the States of the rights to these lands and territories. The Declaration provides that «States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples

¹⁰ Id., pp. 12 and 13.

Consultation



concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources » (Art. 32). It also provides that States should avoid moving indigenous peoples from their lands without having received their free, prior, and informed consent.

The text also recognizes individual and collective rights concerning education, health and employment, as well as their right to maintain and strengthen their political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions. This recognition is accompanied by the possibility, if indigenous peoples so choose, to participate fully in the political, social and cultural life of the country in which they live.

The Declaration specifically states that indigenous peoples have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture. ■

Mbororo art



Obligation of States to respect the rights of indigenous peoples to land, territories and resources

Indigenous peoples are entirely dependent upon their ancestral lands and the resources pertaining to these lands for their survival. This dependency may be attributed to their culture and way of life, mainly consisting of hunting and gathering in the case of indigenous forest peoples and pastoralism in the case of nomadic pastoralists. It is for this reason that ILO Convention No. 169 and the UNDRIP provide for the recognition of the rights of ownership and possession of indigenous peoples over the lands which they traditionally occupy and the respect of their procedures for transmission, the safeguard of the rights of the persons concerned to the natural resources pertaining to their land, including a sharing of benefits or compensation when any exploration or exploitation of these resources is authorized. Indigenous peoples must not be removed from their lands, except in exceptional circumstances and subject to certain guarantees. ■

PART 2

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instruments protecting indigenous peoples

THE MECHANISMS, PROCEDURES AND PROGRAMMES FOR THE PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND THE AFRICAN UNION

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues ¹¹

The mandate of the Permanent Forum, which was established in 2000, is to provide expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as well as to other programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations system, through ECOSOC.

It also strives to raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities related to indigenous issues within the United Nations system. Finally, it prepares and disseminates information on indigenous issues. It holds annual ten-day sessions in New York.

Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ¹²

The Special Rapporteur's mandate is to conduct visits in a number of countries, including African countries, at the invitation of the States. These visits enable the Special Rapporteur to examine the situation of indigenous peoples with respect to the exercise of their rights and to address recommendations to the States. In fulfilling this mandate, the Special Rapporteur submits annual reports on situations or issues affecting the rights of indigenous peoples; responds to information received on allegations concerning the situation of indigenous peoples' rights in specific countries; and, finally, undertakes activities in countries to ensure the follow-up of recommendations included in the reports.

¹¹ For further information, see: <http://undesadspd.org/indigenouspeoples.aspx>.

¹² See: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/SRIIndigenousPeoples/Pages/SRIPeoplesIndex.aspx>



The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the United Nations Human Rights Council ¹³

Established as an advisory body of the Human Rights Council in 2007, the Expert Mechanism is made up of five experts, including indigenous experts.

The Expert Mechanism's mandate is to provide technical expertise on issues dealing with the rights of indigenous peoples, mainly through studies as needed. It contributes, with its advice, towards promoting the UNDRIP and makes proposals which are then examined by the Council.

The Secretariat of the Expert Mechanism is provided by the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The regional legal and institutional framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa ¹⁴

The legal framework

In Africa, the existing legal framework for promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples is composed of two major texts adopted by the African Union : the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter); and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

Ratified today by virtually all African countries,¹⁵ the African Charter entered into effect in October 1986. It takes up the principle of universality of human rights, while taking into account the historical virtues and values of African civilisations.

¹³ For further information, see: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Pages/EMRIPIndex.aspx>

¹⁴ See: <http://www.achpr.org>

¹⁵ With the exception of South Sudan.

Protecting the cultural rights of indigenous peoples

The culture and way of life of indigenous peoples are key elements, without which they would not exist as an entity distinct from other sectors of the population. It is therefore important for States to reaffirm the right of these peoples not to be subjected to « forced assimilation » or to the destruction of their culture, which would result in their collective disappearance. The governments are called upon to ensure the protection of the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. ■

26

The African Charter reaffirms the commitment of the African States to the freedoms and human rights contained in the Declarations, Conventions and other instruments adopted in the framework of the Organization of African Union and the United Nations. The African Charter upholds the right of everyone – and therefore also of indigenous peoples – to non-discrimination, equality before the law, and the protection of women and the family. It protects civil and political, as well as economic and socio-cultural rights. Although it does not contain a definition of the concept of « peoples », the African Charter defines their rights, including the right to existence, to the free disposal of their wealth and natural resources, to their economic, social and cultural development, to peace and security, and to a general satisfactory environment favourable to their development.

The Maputo Protocol entered into force in November 2005. To date, it has been ratified by 36 countries, including Cameroon (May 2009). It guarantees the fundamental rights of women as a whole and seeks to respond to the specific problems and issues of African women. The rights protected by the Maputo Protocol include the following: the protection against all forms of discrimination and violence; the prohibition of all forms of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation; and the effective access of women to judicial and legal services.

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instruments protecting indigenous peoples

Indigenous women



It also recognizes the right of women to education and to their participation in the political and decision-making process. It upholds their right to training and health, their right to control their fertility, and their right to economic and social welfare. It protects women against forced marriages, as well as married women and those who are legally separated.

The institutional framework

The Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa was set up by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights at its 28th ordinary session, which was held from 23 to 6 November 2000 in Cotonou in Benin. The Working Group's mandate is to examine the concept of indigenous people and communities in Africa, as well as to study the implication of the African Charter and the well-being of indigenous communities, especially with regard to the right to equality, the right to dignity, protection against domination, the right to self-determination and the promotion of cultural development and identity.

The Working Group carries out field and fact-finding missions in the States Parties, with the overall objective of looking carefully into the situation of indigenous peoples. ■

PART



Non-timber forest products (snails)

3

Indigenous issues in Cameroon and the media

There is an urgent need today to take into account the rights of indigenous peoples in the development programmes and processes in the countries in which they live, and this gives rise to many issues. Wishing to contribute towards finding solutions to these concerns, the United Nations created a normative framework in order not only to create awareness of the specific rights of these peoples but also to undertake actions to promote and enhance them. It therefore introduced many initiatives, including the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, which is commemorated on 9 August every year.

The commemoration of this event in Cameroon brings together a considerable number of actors, including representatives from indigenous organizations, the public authorities, civil society organizations and media professionals. It gives these actors the opportunity, thanks to the Government's support and that of its partners including the ILO and the CNUDHD-CA, to come together in order to make their contribution towards identifying the problems and seeking solutions to advance the issue of indigenous peoples.

In 2014, a meeting of indigenous peoples and media professionals, held in conjunction with the International Day, succeeded in identifying a number of reasons for the a fairly limited access of indigenous peoples to the media. The conclusions reached through the discussions point to the fact that indigenous peoples do not have appropriate access to the media due to :

- discriminatory attitudes and behaviour;
- prejudices about marginalization, and a tendency to distort information or exaggerate events to serve hidden interests; and
- a lack of awareness of and attention paid to their specific cultural characteristics and way of life.

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Indigenous issues in Cameroon and the media

According to the indigenous representatives, it is rare for them to be appreciated for what they truly represent and to have their rights and identity respected — apart from the times when they « sell » the wealth of their culture (singing, dancing, etc.), which is considered a source of attraction for tourists and foreigners. Here again, they have no access to the financial profits earned from the sale of the products of their traditional knowledge and craftsmanship. Further, indigenous peoples wish for greater transparency in the administration of any projects concerning them.

A FEW POINTS TO FOLLOW

Taking into account the rights and specific characteristics of indigenous peoples in preparing and conducting media activities constitutes a major step towards improving the access of indigenous peoples to the media. This implies, for instance, that media professionals should respect not only the cultural and religious sensitivities of these peoples, but also their traditional rites considered sacred and exclusively reserved for the initiated (e.g., the Djengi). These must not be the subject of any broadcasts or publications without their consent.

There should be prior consultations with indigenous communities so that they are adequately involved in media coverage on issues affecting them. From the practical standpoint, this calls for regular and on-going dialogue between indigenous peoples and the media. This would allow for preliminary discussions with the indigenous peoples on a specific subject so that they are able to express their views in full knowledge of the facts. They must be given time to reflect, without being pressurized or given promises that might influence their decisions.

As regards practical matters such as the choice of a venue for a media event and the participation of indigenous peoples, it is vital to take account of logistical constraints, such as difficulties in travelling, so as not to compromise the participation of the persons concerned.

Mbororo parade



When broadcasting a radio programme, account must be taken of the geographical coverage and listening hours that are suitable, as well as of the gender dimension, to ensure a higher participation of the communities concerned.

The table below gives an example of a broadcasting plan :

WHO ? TARGET	ON WHAT ? THEME	HOW ? LANGUAGE, MEDIA AND AUDIENCE TIME
Indigenous and local communities	Rights of IP : thematic approach (e.g., education, health, employment conditions, lands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local or indigenous language - Community radios - Between 6 and 8 pm
Political leaders, elites, decision-makers, city-dwellers, parliamentarians	Rights of IP : thematic approach (e.g., participation and consultation mechanisms; IP and decentralization process; stigmatization of IP, indigenous women subjected to violence; place of culture in the lives of IP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - French or English language - Radio, television, interactive programmes, Internet (+ newspapers) - Between 7 and 10 am
Local communities	Promotion and protection of rights of IP Cultural differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local languages - Radio, television, (+ newspapers) - Between 6 and 8 am or between 5 and 7 pm

PART 3

Indigenous issues in Cameroon and the media

Once put in place, consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples regarding events generating media coverage are expected to provide answers to the questions explored in the above table. Indigenous communities are inextricably bound to their cultures and ways of life. Therefore, sensitive aspects related to their cultures such as « sacred rights », their non-availability due to seasonal activities, and the need for equitable participation of all communities in such events (Mbororo and forest peoples) need to be taken into account from the outset.

The indigenous peoples can, through the existing community mechanisms, inform each other and decide together upon the type and scope of events they want to be covered by the media. This implies making contact — through their leaders and institutions — with the media, so that they can establish a plan of the activities to be covered, both with respect to the protection of their rights and the promotion of their cultural identity. Thought should be given, for example, to organizing interviews, radio and television broadcasts (including in indigenous languages) on various subjects referring to indigenous problems and potentialities. This would also allow the indigenous peoples to inform the general public on the richness of their culture and identity.

The indigenous peoples and the media professionals might also, by means of these mechanisms, work together in preparing, implementing and following-up these activities. For instance, they could strive to avoid words liable to shock sensitivities, such as the use of pejorative or inappropriate terms to describe or refer to indigenous peoples (« Pygmy » to describe the Baka); to verify sources of information on a regular basis; and to undertake a joint follow-up assessment of the activities.

CONSIDERING THE TRAINING OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Apart from the methodological matters referred to above, it appears important to create capacity-building opportunities for the leaders of the indigenous communities interested in new technologies and information and communication skills. This would enable them to acquire new competencies to serve the interest of their communities. It would also provide young members of the indigenous community with the opportunity to take an interest in the media professions and to provide input to activities in this area on account of their knowledge of the indigenous environment.

It goes without saying that this will require consulting the persons concerned and taking account of their opinions and aspirations in order to achieve optimum results. ■



Workshop to validate this guide, May 2015

Summary of the opinions of the indigenous representatives expressed on their participation in media events (Workshop, May 2015)

Points for consideration	Details
Seeking consent	Free, prior and informed consent of the communities concerned should be sought ahead of media activities relating to them
Elements of culture	Songs, dances, traditional rites, respect of the cultural and religious sensitivities of the IP
Length and timing of broadcasts (radio and TV)	Take account of the availability of IP when conceptualizing, developing and broadcasting programmes concerning them
Use of appropriate terms	Accepted and agreed upon by the IP, relevance of the information
Gender aspect	Take into account all the components of the population
Principle of equality	Fair and equitable distribution of coverage across the different communities: indigenous forest people (IFP), indigenous savannah people (ISP) etc.
Geographical coverage	Specify the place, the IP targeted, identify the problems, without generalizing them with all the components of the IP
Training plan	Train IP in communication skills and on the right to information. In the case of media experts, training on tools to promote and protect IP rights, as well as raising awareness of these tools
Follow-up assessment	Follow-up assessment of actions to promote the access of IP to the media, establishment of consultation and dialogue platforms, development of roadmaps, verification of the sources of information
Resources	Mobilization of financial, human, material and logistic resources
Respect of the dignity of the IP	Respect of the IPs' will and physical integrity; respect of their rights and their culture

COVERAGE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ISSUES CHECKLIST FOR MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Points to consider in the pressroom	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Have you visited a website on the IP that is related to your subject ?			
Do you go beyond popular events, cultural gatherings and the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples to cover your subject ?			
Have you prepared an advance article ?			
Do you have a database of IP contacts and a system to catalogue your research and ideas ?			
Is there a way of including the IP into any of your activities that do not deal specifically with indigenous issues ?			
What do the IP say on other news channels about the issue in hand ?			
Have you found a new approach or experimented with a different method ?			
Have you considered the possibility that your subject is conveying stereotypes of the IP that may be found elsewhere ?			
If your pressroom deals with IP issues, does it distinguish between « good » and « bad » information ?			
Do you conduct research yourself in the field, rather than by telephone ?			
Do you know these groups' way of dancing or of greeting that you might use ?			
Do you have recourse to humour to illustrate a point concerning indigenous communities ?			
Have you thought of interviewing a colleague who has experience with the IFP and ISP ?			
Have you taken into account the local perception of your media outlet ? Is it favourable to the type of coverage that you want to do ?			

COVERAGE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ISSUES CHECKLIST FOR MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Points to consider in the field	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Do you adapt to IP culture (appropriate attire, greetings, food etc.)?			
Do you set out to gain the confidence of your interviewees or the community?			
Have you asked your host in the indigenous community if it is appropriate to bring a gift when preparing for an interview, and if so, what type?			
Does your work respect the principle of neutrality?			
What are the cultural practices with respect to the naming or the use of an image of a deceased person in an indigenous community?			
Are you aware of your prejudices when you are interpreting aspects linked to facial characteristics (such as eye contact)?			
When you are interviewing an elderly person, do you go beyond the allotted time?			
Have you checked before the interview whether the interviewee understands your expectations?			
Do you consult a wide range of sources within the indigenous community?			
In a conflict situation, do you ask questions that might achieve common ground?			
Have you observed the environment in which you find yourself?			
How are you going to include the IP as a « solution to the problem» in your subject?			
Does your information come directly from the IP?			
Have you interviewed people who are not indigenous?			

COVERAGE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ISSUES CHECKLIST FOR MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Points to consider in the field	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Do you think about ways to describe the context and history of the IP with charts, tables or web content ?			
Have you updated your file of contacts ?			
Have you made any friends in the environment concerned ?			
Have you checked your sources ?			
Points to consider on the radio			
Have you asked the IP you are interviewing what term they would like you to use to describe them ?			
Have you checked the usage and pronunciation of the words in the indigenous language ?			
Have you made sure that the IP, who are taking part in the programme, understand the subject(s) that will be brought up during the discussion ?			
Assessment of the broadcast			
Did you behave in a respectful manner ?			
Did you provide the persons interviewed with a copy of a recording of the programme ?			
Did you cover all the important aspects of the topic ?			
What lessons have you learned from this exercise ?			
What specific measures have you taken to improve the next broadcast ?			
What effect has your report had on the audience or decision-makers ?			

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