


Indigenous peoples are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic daily, taking strong measures to protect their communities and territories from this virus. In these times, historical exclusions affecting rights to basic services and health infrastructure have become more acute, making indigenous peoples an extremely fragile and vulnerable section of society in this pandemic. In addition, attempts to appropriate traditional lands, territories and resources and open up areas for mining and commercial exploitation continue in certain regions. At the same time, indigenous

Foreword

The global spread of COVID-19 has thrown into sharp relief existing patterns of social inequality and vulnerability around the world. Indigenous peoples are among those most severely impacted by and vulnerable to the pandemic, reflecting long-standing disparities in health services, economic access and political power.

IUCN has long recognised that indigenous peoples play a vital role in conserving lands, seas and natural resources across the world's most biodiverse regions. Indigenous knowledge, cultures, governance and economic systems contribute to addressing the most pressing environmental challenges facing the Earth and humanity. In 2016, IUCN took the important step of creating a new category of membership for indigenous peoples organisations (IPOs), in order to strengthen the voice and role of indigenous peoples in IUCN and the wider conservation community.

In order to make visible the impact that COVID-19 is having in their lands, territories and resources, IUCN Member IPOs, together with IUCN's Global Programme on Governance and Rights, present this brief entitled *A*  *:*

The impact of COVID 19 on indigenous peoples

To date, all of the lands and territories where IUCN Member IPOs are located report positive cases of COVID-19. Transmission has been linked to those who leave communities to work in urban centres, as well as to internal and external migrants. However, national and global reports do not have specific records regarding indigenous peoples, making plans and strategies for medium and long term emergency care for the needs of indigenous peoples difficult to develop.

In all regions, IPOs report that they are facing aggravated health risks, food insecurity, loss of employment and livelihoods, and increased violence against indigenous women. Some leaders in forest rich regions such as

I O responses to health challenges

Indigenous organisations around the world have responded quickly to prevent the spread of COVID-19. One common response has been the increased use of **indigenous medicine**, especially focusing on boosting the immune system using medicine from forests and home gardens; **increased care for vulnerable people**, whose safety has been threatened by the pandemic, is also being addressed:

- Traditional medicine is being collected to ensure its availability in communities. [Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica \(COICA\)](#) notes that many traditional healers are making use of traditional medicine in the Amazon region.
 - Protection of the elders in the community is fundamental for indigenous peoples because protecting the elders is protecting the holders of indigenous knowledge. Measures to protect elders are currently being strengthened in Maya communities throughout Mesoamerica.
 - Globally, the pandemic has led to increased rates of violence against women. In Guatemala an emergency number has been established for
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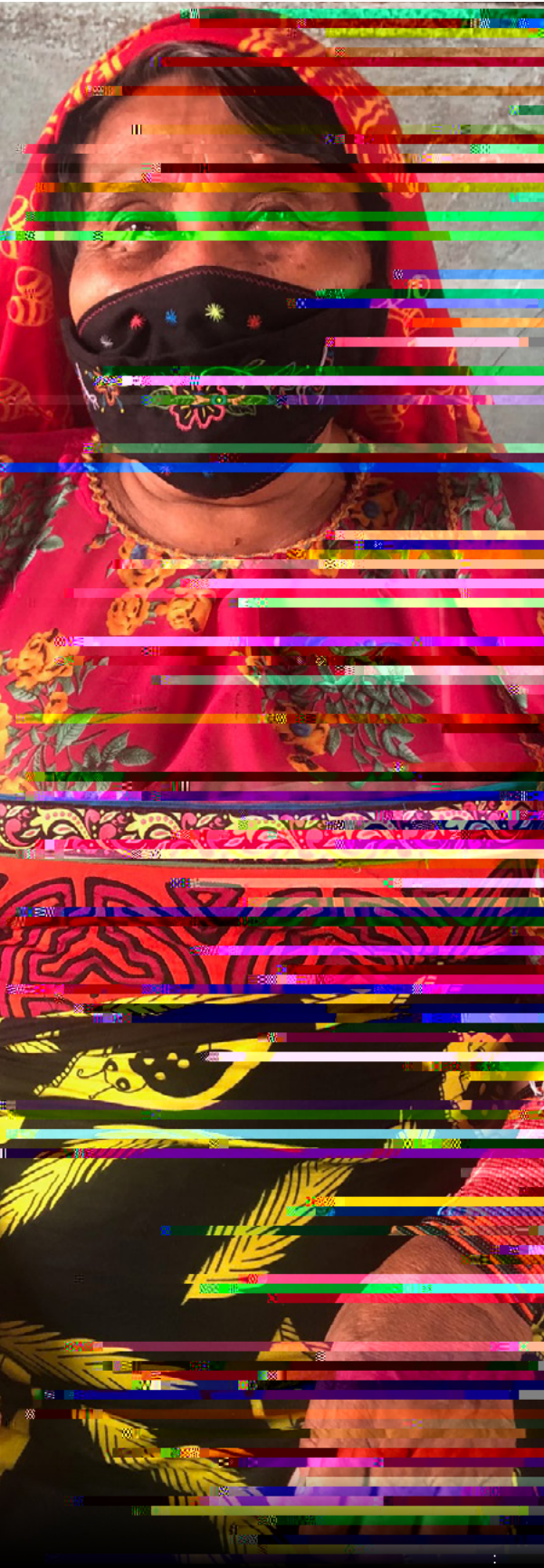
- Networks of community monitors are being set up in some areas to track the symptoms of community members and

- In Myanmar, the Karen indigenous peoples in the Salween Peace Park have demonstrated strong indigenous governance and food sovereignty in the face of COVID-19 pandemic including practicing their traditional knowledge about diverse indigenous agricultural systems that integrate biodiversity conservation aspects.
- In Guatemala, [Asociación de Desarrollo Productivo y de Servicios \(TIKONEL\)](#), AAT and Sot'zil are mobilising resources to develop local productive activities – such as fish farming and planting local and organic seeds – in order to promote a short food growing cycle that will improve food availability and the health of indigenous families during the pandemic.
- FENAMAD in Peru has been promoting strategies to ensure food security in communities through the revitalisation of traditional agricultural and forest management practices and knowledge since March of this year.
- In Paraguay, addressing the food and health emergency brought on by the pandemic, FAPI is organising food kit donations to more than 500 indigenous families in critical situations.

Economic adversit

The economies of indigenous populations have been severely affected by the restrictive measures taken by governments and communities as a result of the pandemic, since the agricultural, craft, tourism, fishing and service activities that they participate in have been curtailed. Withoutiv

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT



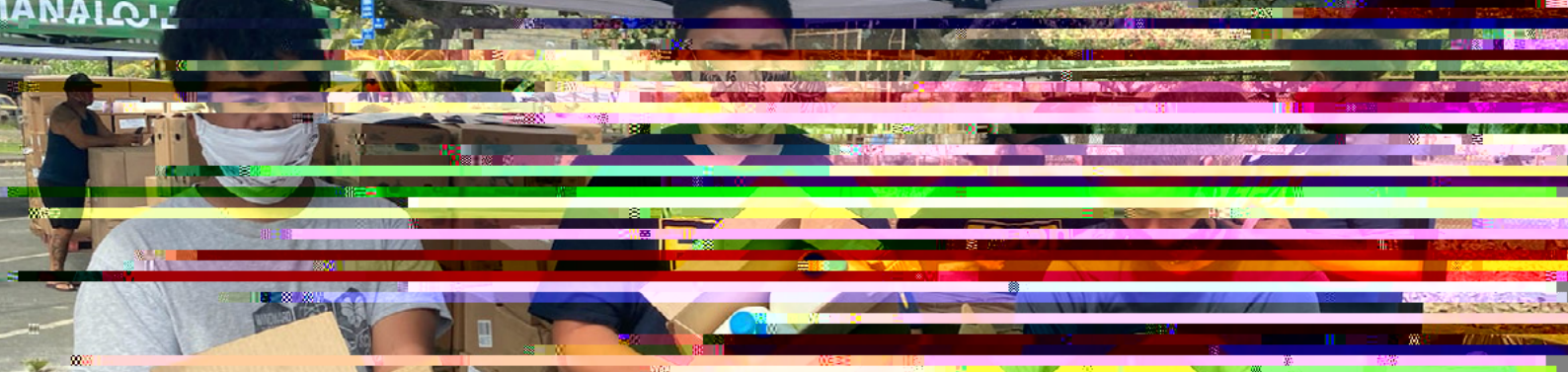
Economic adversity linked to the pandemic is heightened by persistent gaps in basic infrastructure and investments in indigenous communities. IPOs stress that there is an urgent need to close the infrastructure gap that they have been facing for decades. For example, the ICC highlighted that there is an urgent need to improve the poor infrastructure situation that all Inuit regions are facing, even in first world countries, through major new investments in communities. This should prioritise the basic infrastructure investments that underpin economic development and human well being, such as housing, water, and sewer and broadband connections. Similar demands are being echoed by other Indigenous peoples across the globe, voicing the urgent need to address social and economic equity as critical for the survival of indigenous peoples to this pandemic.

Cracks in economic and in infrastructural systems: reflections in North America

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, indigenous communities in North America have experienced significant economic and infrastructural challenges. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and highlighted the need for targeted investments in infrastructure and economic development in these communities.

Indigenous responses to build economic resilience

- In Hawai'i, indigenous communities impacted by mass tourism are taking a breath, **observing and monitoring the recovery of their resources** in hopes they can establish a new baseline.
- The ICC in Alaska is considering how to bring forward the lessons learned from this pandemic to ensure future infrastructural preparedness, and identify strategies and priorities to fully **close the existing gaps** and end the disparities that have been deepening during the pandemic.
- Around the world, indigenous peoples are **strengthening their traditional governance systems** to manage access to natural resources and build more resilient economic systems. Now more than ever, indigenous rights to self-determination are fundamental, as the direct managers of the crisis and its impacts in their communities.



Proposals from IUCN IPO Members on strengthening the resilience of indigenous peoples during the pandemic

The experiences highlighted in this brief make visible how indigenous communities are positioning and empowering themselves as a source of solutions to build their resilience to this crisis. At this time, indigenous communities are working hard to create self-directed and purposeful solutions to the impacts and post-COVID-19 actions.

IUCN IPO Members, together with their national and regional organisations, are reaching a consensus and putting forward the following proposals from different regions, as alternatives for solving the crisis and recognising their rights and participation. Their proposals – which focus on strengthening health information systems and access to needed materials and services, promoting community economic revival, and ensuring environmental resilience – are as follows:

Information on COVID 19 and support to indigenous peoples:

Information on COVID-19 and support to indigenous peoples: This section discusses the impact of the pandemic on indigenous communities and the need for targeted support. It highlights the importance of strengthening health information systems and ensuring access to necessary materials and services. The text emphasizes the role of indigenous communities in developing self-directed solutions and the need for external support to enhance their resilience during and after the crisis.

Community economic revival:

Community economic revival: This section focuses on strategies to promote the economic recovery of indigenous communities. It discusses the importance of supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and fostering community economic revival. The text highlights the need for targeted interventions to address the economic challenges faced by indigenous peoples during the pandemic and to ensure their long-term sustainability and resilience.