

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

... to be here. Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to everyone. Welcome and thank you so much for joining this webinar, which is the second of a series of webinars oriented to indigenous people's organizations from around the world.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

First of all, I would like to give special thanks to all our presenters, including USAID colleagues, implementing partners and especially indigenous people's organizations, leaders and representatives who have worked very hard to put together this webinar today. Next, please.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

First of all, I would like to just briefly let you know why this USAID webinar series. The main reason is to help indigenous people's organizations from around the world to better understand how USAID works, how USAID operates and how the indigenous people's organizations can access the many, many technical and financial resources of USAID around the world.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

To do that, we have planned this webinar series. As many of you know, the first webinar was already conducted on March 23 on how does USAID operate. The second webinar is the one that we're carrying out today. It's called USAID Projects Focusing on Indigenous Peoples. I'll speak more about this shortly. Finally, there will be a third webinar which is called Partnership Opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and USAID Implementing Partners, which is planned for Tuesday, May 18. I hope you all will be also joining that webinar on May 18. One of the main aspects that we would like to achieve through these webinars is not only for you to identify actions that need to be taken in order to find opportunities to work together with USAID, but also we would like to advocate for the power of strategic partnership to strengthen your own capacity as indigenous people's organizations and become great USAID implementing partners as well. Next, please.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

First, I would like to give you a refresher on the new USAID policy on promoting the rights of indigenous people. We call it PRO-IP for short. It has four key objectives. I would like to mention that this webinar series has been designed precisely to disseminate and to provide tools and best practices for USAID missions and indigenous people's organizations and implementing partners to better implement this new USAID policy on promoting the rights of indigenous peoples.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

It has four key objectives. The first objective is to strengthen the engagement with indigenous peoples in order to safeguard and align with their priorities. The second objective is to integrate the priorities of the indigenous peoples into the portfolio of USAID missions in the various countries and also to use a cross-sectoral approach with programming. That is, a more holistic approach to programming.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

The third objective is to empower indigenous peoples' representative organizations and build their capacities that are institutional capacities in order to better manage their own programs and projects. The fourth objective is to foster an enabling environment to exercise indigenous peoples' rights. This

mainly had to do with political incidents in order for countries to create public policies and regulatory frameworks to benefit indigenous peoples.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

These four key objectives need to be seen as interconnected. They cannot be seen as isolated or silos. These four objectives need to work together in order to achieve the final goal of promoting the rights of indigenous peoples. Next, please.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

We're very excited that today we will showcase seven case studies of projects and initiatives supported by USAID from around the world. These are only a few of many projects currently implemented with USAID support. The seven case studies presented today will also help us to celebrate Earth Week. The more than 450 million indigenous peoples of the world are intimately linked to Mother Earth. These projects will give us an idea of how they are doing it. I would also like to send special best wishes to everyone who is attending this week the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

As you can see here, this session will be divided in three panels. The first panel will be focusing on indigenous peoples strategies on the country level. We will have projects from USAID Guatemala, Brazil and Colombia. The second panel, we will focus on regional projects. In this panel, we will have projects from USAID Peru and the South America region and South Africa as well, the Southern Africa region. The third panel will be focusing on community-driven projects. We will have a project from USAID/Peru and one project from USAID/Nepal.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

Before moving on, I would like to give special recognition and thanks to our Indigenous Peoples Alliance for Rights and Development, IPARD, team, Alejandro Paredes, Rita Spadafora and Mary Donovan, who have diligently helped me to plan and coordinate this webinar series. Special thanks also to our wonderful GROW team, Soojin, Mary, Cheyenne and our great interpreters that are going to be helping us in today's session.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

I would also like to give special recognition to my colleagues at USAID who for nearly four years worked hard to develop and finally get approval for the first USAID policy on promoting the rights of indigenous peoples. My colleague Vy Lam who is present here, also an advisor of indigenous peoples, Lauren Baker and many others, my predecessor Brian Keane, et cetera, and other colleagues at USAID, many thanks to all of them.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

Without further ado, now I would like to invite our colleague Rita Spadafora to please introduce each one of the case studies and facilitate the Q&A sessions. Thank you. Welcome. Take it away, Rita.

Rita Spadafora:

Hello to all the participants. This first section on strategies at the mission level will start with the USAID mission in Guatemala. We will have Erin Krasik, planning and support office director; Ajb'ee Jiménez,

indigenous peoples advisor for the Guatemalan mission; Deyna Caal from Catholic Relief Services, implementing the community-leading development activity, and Ofelia Sanchez, a young indigenous woman giving a testimony on her experience working with USAID. Welcome, Erin.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

Cannot hear you, Erin.

Rita Spadafora:

Erin, you're muted.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

Oh, no.

Soojin:

Erin, you might be double muted. Would you please check on your computer, if you're using any... Do you have any other chat rooms open?

Rita Spadafora:

We'll go ahead with Ajb'ee.

Soojin:

Erin, do you mind hopping off and then rejoin? Yeah, thanks.

Ajb'ee Jiménez:

Good morning and good afternoon, everyone. Thank you very much for joining. My name is Ajb'ee Jiménez. Unfortunately, we could not hear Erin. Hopefully, she will come in. Let's see if she joins. We wanted to share with you a video of the work that USAID/Guatemala is doing to engage indigenous peoples through the work we're doing with our implementing partners. But I see Erin is back, so maybe we want to try again and see if her mic works. Go ahead, Erin.

Erin Krasik:

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Fantastic.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

We hear you. Great.

Erin Krasik:

Sorry for the delay. USAID/Guatemala's program office coordinates issues fundamental to achieving the mission in Guatemala's development objectives. An explicit top priority is engagement with indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples represent almost half of Guatemala's population, but extreme poverty impacts 22% of this population compared to 7% of the non-indigenous population. This affects social, economic and political status in profound ways. For that reason, we're committed to work with and for indigenous peoples to prioritize their development priorities as we support a resilient and prosperous Guatemala.

Erin Krasik:

First, as noted, we're extremely proud to be USAID's first mission with an Indigenous People's Engagement Strategy. This creates an organizational framework for our outreach involvement and inclusion of indigenous peoples. Second, as you know, we're proud to have a senior advisor on indigenous peoples. Ajb'ee Jiménez is from the Maya Mam community and he knows well to context for indigenous peoples in this country. He leads our efforts to align activities to our strategy and promote equal participation. Finally, Ajb'ee and our staff are in constant communication with partners to guide USAID engagement with indigenous peoples. Together, these mission-level practices and structures ensure our engagement is meaningful, intentional, inclusive and impactful.

Erin Krasik:

In the chat box, please find the link to our strategy. We hope it's a useful model and our experience is useful to understand how to institutionalize indigenous people's engagement. Thank you.

Ajb'ee Jiménez:

Thank you so much, Erin, for your words. We also watch a short video showcasing the work USAID/Guatemala is doing through our implementing partners. Today, I'm honored to introduce to you two of my sisters, Deyna Caal and Ofelia Sanchez, both coming from the Maya [inaudible 00:14:28] in Guatemala. We will have the opportunity to listen to their experiences working with the community-leading development project, which has provided USAID/Guatemala with opportunities to collaborate, learn and adapt through the work. [Spanish 00:14:49].

Deyna Caal:

[Spanish 00:15:00].

Ajb'ee Jiménez:

[Spanish 00:17:25].

Ajb'ee Jiménez:

(silence)

Ajb'ee Jiménez:

[Spanish 00:18:10]-

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

[Spanish 00:18:13].

Ajb'ee Jiménez:

[Spanish 00:18:18].

Ofelia Sanchez:

[Spanish 00:18:28].

Rita Spadafora:

Many thanks to the Guatemalan mission team. The next case is USAID/Brazil highlighting the work they have been doing to empower indigenous women in the portfolio. I would like to introduce Marcela Menezes, deputy coordinator of the indigenous people's program with the International Education Institute of Brazil, IEB, who will make the presentation today. Many thanks also to Alex Araujo, USAID environmental project manager and point of contact for matters relating to indigenous people. Marcela, you're next.

Marcela Menezes:

Hi, everybody. Thank you for the invitation. Should I share my screen? Okay.

Soojin:

Hi, Marcela. I have this video ready.

Marcela Menezes:

We'll see a video from Telma from UMIAB, which is leadership indigenous woman. We will see the video and then I'll do the presentation.

Video:

[foreign language 00:23:52].

Video:

[foreign language 00:24:18].

Marcela Menezes:

I'm going to talk about IEB's work with indigenous women in Brazil. Who we are. The next. We are an NGO with 23 Years of existence. We have a mission to strengthen social actors and their role in building a fair and sustainable society. Here is our website. Next.

Marcela Menezes:

The first experience is about UMIAB, which is the Union of Indigenous Woman of the Brazilian Amazon. We like to talk about training for institutional capacity building that we do with them. The expansion of access to communication infrastructure in the Brazilian Amazon. We did such a mobilization plan through virtual tools because of the pandemic situation. We also did with them an elective virtual assembly via Zoom and a participatory strategic plan to combat violence against indigenous woman and to promote the collective and self-care.

Marcela Menezes:

The next slides, we see some photos. In the right, there is Telma which was in the video. In the left is the other indigenous woman during the assembly. Here's the logo of UMIAB.

Marcela Menezes:

The next experience is about training indigenous woman and Southern Amazon on sustainable value chains. It's called Among Indigenous Relatives. We are working on continuing capacity building through the FORMAR platform, which is a virtual tool that we developed. We did internet access and equipment

training on virtual tools and media education and direct cash transfers to support their own projects to strengthen value chains in their own territories. Exchange of experience and a network of 32 indigenous women in Southern Amazon. There is some photographs with these womans in this Plataforma FORMAR that we developed [inaudible 00:27:59] training courses and entre PARENTAS, which is the tradition between relatives.

Marcela Menezes:

Some results. We have improved capacity to advocate for and defend their rights, the indigenous women's rights. Leadership better prepared to represent the interest of indigenous women in the political sphere and discussions, and creation and strengthening of a network of indigenous women in the Amazon to combat violence and promote sustainable production in Southern Amazon.

Marcela Menezes:

Finally, some main challenges. The lack of political support to matters pertaining to environment and indigenous rights, the political contest in Brazil then government, Bolsonaro. The health context with indigenous people. Because of the pandemic, experiencing high levels of infections. The weakening of environmental and indigenous political policies because of the government. The lack of infrastructure, access to internet and communication equipment. And the main challenge, consolidate Amazon Indigenous Women Network.

Marcela Menezes:

That's it. Thank you. We are here to talk about it.

Video:

[foreign language 00:29:31].

Rita Spadafora:

Thanks to USAID/Brazil and to Telma Taurepang and [Maricel Desouza 00:30:45] for their testimonials. The last case study for this first section on strategies at the mission level is from USAID/Colombia. I'd like to present Cristina Barrera, ethnic minorities senior activity manager, and Mauricio Lopez, director of the inclusion for peace activity who will jointly make this presentation. Over to you.

Cristina Barrera:

[Spanish 00:31:07]. Welcome. Thank you. Welcome. I'm Cristina Barrera. I work at USAID/Colombia. I'm here with Mauricio Lopez, my colleague from IOM.

Cristina Barrera:

We are going to present USAID assistance to [inaudible 00:31:28] communities in Colombia and especially focus in our inclusion for peace activity, implemented by IOM. Now, some word from our mission director, Larry Sacks.

Video:

Over the last three years, I've come to learn that Colombia's strongest asset is its extraordinary culture and its ethnic diversity. The more than 100 indigenous communities who inhabit this beautiful country, their languages, their rich traditions, their courage and their resilience are an important part of

Colombia's identity as a nation and an inspiration to all. Over the years, USAID/Colombia has proudly woven strong partnerships with traditional authorities, leaders, organizations and communities which every day enrich Colombia's path to an inclusive and a sustainable peace.

Video:

Today, as we celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day and the issuance of USAID's policy on promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, we honor the leadership, the strength and the courage from indigenous peoples in Colombia, and we look forward to continuing to safeguard what the Arhuaco, Wiwa, Kogi and Kankuamo indigenous peoples know to be a [Spanish 00:32:40], the heart of the world.

Cristina Barrera:

In Colombia, Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples disproportionately face discrimination barriers to social and economic mobility, limited access to service and violence, including the impacts of the armed conflict. Their full economic, political and social participation is key to the lasting peace. The conclusion is a [inaudible 00:33:05] government priority in Colombia.

Cristina Barrera:

USAID/Colombia has moved from sectoral programming for ethnic communities to comprehensive, standalone activities and in 2018, issue for the first time direct awards to ethnic organization responding to their self-determined development priorities. In 2020, the mission signed four direct grants with ethnic organizations. These grants support the development of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities and organizations that are recovering from the COVID pandemic opportunity to use from these communities economic opportunities and peace implementation. Now, the floor is yours Mauricio.

Mauricio Lopez:

[Spanish 00:33:45].

Video:

[Spanish 00:36:34].

Video:

[Spanish 00:36:34].

Mauricio Lopez:

[Spanish 00:38:18].

Rita Spadafora:

Thanks to USAID/Colombia team, Marino Cordoba and Fany Kuiru Castro for their words, and to the USAID Brazil and Guatemala missions again. To all the presenters, implementing partners and indigenous peoples representatives as we close this first section, I will briefly like to say that it was not easy to select these seven projects. There are many interesting projects that USAID implements around the world with indigenous peoples that we hope to share with you in future webinars.

Rita Spadafora:

This next section, we will talk about regional projects working with organizations in different countries. We will start with the Amazon Indigenous Rights and Resources project, AIRR. To present this project, I'm glad to introduce Robert Kenny, director of the AIRR project with the WWFUS.

Rita Spadafora:

Over to you, Robert. Are you all ready? Good.

Robert Kenny:

Can you hear me? Hi, Rita. Good morning, everyone. Yes?

Rita Spadafora:

Yes, we can hear you.

Robert Kenny:

Okay, excellent. Thank you. I think Soojin or someone's going to help me with the slides. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, everyone. My name is Robert Kenny. I am with the World Wildlife Fund. I'm the director of the Amazon Indigenous Rights and Resources project. I'm going to talk to you a little bit about our governance and decision-making structures and process. And before that, I'll talk a little bit about our project overall so you understand what the context is. Next slide.

Robert Kenny:

So where do we work? We work in four countries of the Amazon, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil. Work in three key landscapes within these countries that are home to a large number of indigenous groups, as well as they harbor a significant biodiversity. Next slide.

Robert Kenny:

Who are we? The project is currently implemented by 17 different organizations made up of indigenous federations. Our principal partners are national indigenous federations from each of the four countries. They are listed here in this slide as well as COICA, which is a regional umbrella organization. We also work with some national federations as well as NGOs based in Peru, United States and Brazil. Next slide.

Robert Kenny:

What do we do? As the name of our project suggests, we work on rights and resources. The rights aspect of our work centers mostly on strengthening indigenous people's organizations, building up their capacities to monitor what is going on and the impacts on their territories and using these, too, so that they can advocate for their rights in dealing with public and private sector entities. The other aspect of our work has to do with resources. This entails building up and strengthening indigenous economies primarily through working with indigenous enterprises through grants and tailored technical assistance. Next slide.

Robert Kenny:

Why? Why do we work with indigenous territories and indigenous peoples? I think first and foremost, because it's the right thing to do, but then there are benefits for others that are not directly involved in these areas. I want to bring your attention to this slide. These are four indigenous territories that we're working with in the Tapajós basin in Brazil.

Robert Kenny:

Please focus your attention on the bottom two, Japuirá and Erikpatsa. This is what they look like from a Google Earth image. We know that these territories are home to several indigenous groups. We also know that they're very effective in terms of maintaining forest cover, providing ecosystem services, but also that they're under a lot of stress from outside land use, change in infrastructure. This is what we're up against. Next slide.

Robert Kenny:

So how do we bring this all together? That's the challenge that we face. We're a large complex project. We work in four countries. How do we ensure that decision-making is taking place close to the ground, is relevant to what is going on in the ground and is not centralized from the city of Lima where I'm based, which is on the coast and it's a desert city far removed from the biome and the people that we're working with? What we've attempted to do, and we are attempting to do, is create this structure. Right now, it's based on three levels of decision-making. I put them purposely in these three nondescript squares because it's not about hierarchy. It's about defining [inaudible 00:43:01] appropriate roles and responsibilities. Next slide.

Robert Kenny:

That first level of decision-making, which I would argue is closest to the ground, deal with indigenous economies. These committees are comprised of people from local federations as well as the national organizations, and have helped the project decide grant selection criteria, because I mentioned grants are central to our work. They've also helped us decide what levels of funding are appropriate for different sizes of companies and ultimately decide which enterprises [inaudible 00:43:35] support.

Robert Kenny:

This is a process that's already taken place in Peru, for example. It's underway in Colombia and will soon be taking place in Ecuador and Brazil. This is the one that is closest to the ground and meets most often.

Robert Kenny:

The next level in terms of scale are national steering committees. Again, represented one in each of the four countries we work in. These national committees are comprised mostly of national federations as well as project implementers, and look at issues mostly related, for example, that are bigger in scale: local policy issues, help us develop work plans, make corrections throughout the year, et cetera. This is an example from the Putumayo landscape in Colombia. Have helped us define where in this landscape we should be working, what are the priorities, and not just looking at where the indigenous territories, or [Spanish 00:44:26] as they're known in Colombia, but also looking at some of the threats that we're trying to address. In this case, they're primarily related to hydrocarbon extraction. Next slide.

Robert Kenny:

Lastly, we have a regional steering committee which is comprised of the leadership of each of the four national federations plus COICA, as well as WWF office directors from the four countries and our NGO partners. This regional steering committee meets less often and focuses more on strategic issues and policy issues that affect each of the four countries. Our advocacy agenda works on a national level as well but internationally, we're working on issues related to climate change, biodiversity and increasing presence at the [inaudible 00:45:13], for example.

Robert Kenny:

But I want to share some words from Gregorio Mirabal. He is the coordinator general of COICA, which represents over 500 ethnic groups living in millions of hectares within the Amazon Basin included in nine countries and territories that comprise the basin.

Video:

[Spanish 00:45:37].

Robert Kenny:

Thank you. Last slide, please. Before saying goodbye, I just wanted to stress a couple of points that Gregorio mentions. One of them is he is challenging us to always think about the impact at the local level, at the territory level as he stresses. This is something that we struggle with constantly. We want to make sure that our impact is reaching communities. We think that with this kind of structure we are doing that, although we always think there's room for improvement.

Robert Kenny:

Gregorio most importantly stresses the fact that this is not something that you do once. It's a process and it's a struggle. It's not easy to have this common mission. So far, this structure, I think, has served us well. Particularly in this past year, as all of you have gone through significant changes and so forth in project execution, we think without having taken that [inaudible 00:47:23] close to the ground and with the national federations and their support to make changes to our work plans, none of this resilience would've been possible.

Robert Kenny:

But I stress this is a process. There's always room for improvement. Thank you very much for your time. It's been a real privilege to share a little bit about our work and to hear about the great work that USAID is supporting around the world.

Rita Spadafora:

Many thanks to you, Robert, and to Gregorio Mirabal from COICA for his words. Before we go to our next region of project, I would like to remind you to send your questions via the chat box or the Q&A box.

Rita Spadafora:

Presenting the next project, we will have Heela Rasool, USAID/Southern Africa democracy, rights and governance deputy team lead, and Roshnee Narrandes, senior program officer for the Advancing Rights in Southern Africa ARISA project. In the video closing this presentation, we have Leslé Jansen, CEO for resource Africa and ARISA's advisory board member. Over to you, Heela.

Heela Rasool:

Thanks, Rita. I'm Heela Rasool and I'm with the USAID/Southern Africa mission. I just wanted to quickly give a brief overview of our mission and how it operates. We are a regional mission covering all of the countries in the Southern Africa region, but have a particular focus on some countries that don't have a USAID office or USAID presence.

Heela Rasool:

Our Advancing Rights in Southern Africa program is our regional human rights program. It aims to improve the recognition, awareness and enforcement of human rights in the Southern Africa region, including protecting the region's most vulnerable and marginalized groups through four key, interrelated intermediate results. The first of which is improving the enabling environment for the promotion and protection of human rights, strengthening the capacity and engagement of regional and national civil society actors to seek redress of rights violations, increasing public demand for improved rule of law and human rights protection and, very importantly, to foster south-to-south community of practice for knowledge and sharing for continued efforts to address human rights violations.

Heela Rasool:

Through this program, we also have four thematic areas that we focus on that we think really get to the crux of addressing issues that are most cogent to marginalized and vulnerable peoples, these being women's customary land rights, media freedoms and digital freedoms, the protection of human rights defenders and indigenous people's rights, which my colleague from ARISA, Roshnee Narrandes, will dive deeper into in this next session.

Roshnee Narrandes:

Many thanks, Heela. Good morning and good afternoon. Good evening, colleagues. As Heela indicated, I will speak to ARISA's work on indigenous people's rights. We're a fairly new program. We're into our third year. We have chosen indigenous people's rights because we feel particularly within the Southern Africa region, indigenous people form some of the most marginalized people in the region.

Roshnee Narrandes:

Our program is based on five principles, the need for consultation and direct input from indigenous people, free informed prior consent, strengthening engagement with indigenous people to support their developmental priorities and self-reliance, empowering indigenous people and their representative organizations to advocate for and exercise their rights in practice, self-determined development, as well as fostering and enabling environment for indigenous people to advocate for and exercise their rights.

Roshnee Narrandes:

On the previous slide... Cheyenne, if you could just go back. This is the area where most indigenous people are found within Southern Africa or rather, the main groups which are the Khoi, which is a collective, as well as the San which is a collective for the San groupings of indigenous people. It straddles the southern area of Angola, a lot of Botswana, northern area of Namibia, as well as South Africa, mainly in the northern province of South Africa, the Northern Cape. Next slide, please.

Roshnee Narrandes:

This is an overview of the kind of support ARISA is providing both at the regional level and at the national level to support the work that we're doing. The support is being done directly to indigenous people's organizations, with the exception of People Opposing Women Abuse where we're working on gender-based violence with them. Next slide, please.

Roshnee Narrandes:

Our objectives within this program is firstly to build capacity and support advocacy efforts of indigenous people's organizations for the recognition of specific rights at the national, regional and international levels on the right to access land and other natural resources, self-representation, political representation and rights to education, culture and language. Next, please.

Roshnee Narrandes:

To support efforts of indigenous people's governance and leadership structures, establish national and regional platforms for advocacy, learning and strategizing between indigenous peoples in-country, but also across the region—as you note from the map, most of the communities straddle the various countries—as well as support advocacy efforts for legal recognition such as in Botswana, where indigenous people are not recognized as indigenous people, but rather are collectively referred to as [foreign language 00:53:44] in terms of nation [inaudible 00:53:46]. Next slide, please.

Roshnee Narrandes:

We also work on conducting research, awareness and advocacy that promotes indigenous people's economic models for self-sustainability, as well as supporting training and capacity building of journalists and CSOs to increase their understanding of indigenous people's issues and the formation of a network of journalists to report on indigenous people's rights throughout the region. We support litigation, legal research and documentation on violations of indigenous people's rights for legal redress. Next, please.

Roshnee Narrandes:

In terms of our strategic key activities that we have managed to do thus far, we provided capacity building support in the form of technical capacity and small grants to a number of indigenous people's organizations. We've trained regional lawyer on indigenous people's rights and how to identify cases for litigation. We've monitored and provided legal support related in a number of cases. Example, the Khomani case which is in the Northern Cape in South Africa.

Roshnee Narrandes:

We've published indigenous people's rights in a COVID-19 report with key recommendations to the Southern African Development Community, which is the regional block, as well as national governments. And we supported advocacy efforts aimed at the Southern African Development Community secretariat and various SADC and mechanisms like [inaudible 00:55:22]. We've supported the participation of women from Southern Africa at specific events in Kenya to engage on a broader continental level.

Roshnee Narrandes:

What has come out of this is that what we've learned is that COVID-19 and the lockdowns have hindered access, as most indigenous people live in remote communities. That is proving to be quite a problem. Taking the work online is not always possible, given some of the challenges around infrastructure, around data [inaudible 00:55:56], around just access to computers, laptops, et cetera, as well as getting indigenous people's issues onto a regional agenda. There is a lot of hesitance on behalf of the Southern African region around acknowledging indigenous people as indigenous people.

Roshnee Narrandes:

There has been some impact. We've created a regional network for information sharing, learning and advocacy across countries. We now have a group of lawyers and journalists who are taking more

interest in issues that affect indigenous people, and we've had a lot of appreciation from indigenous people's organizations for the technical support being provided by ARISA, given that a lot of the work that we do hinders around technical support, mainly organizational development. I'm going to hand over to Leslé to say a few words around the issues around the indigenous people. Thank you.

Video:

Good day, everybody. I'm Leslé Jansen. I'm from an organization called Resource Africa, supporting Southern Africa's IPLCs in the context conservation and looking at conservation as a development approach. I'm also serving as an indigenous expert member of the African Commissions Working Group on Indigenous Populations, looking specifically at the challenges of indigenous people regionally, the issue of indigenous people and also identify in a part of the indigenous Khoikhoi community in Cape Town on the Cape Flats.

Video:

What I can confirm is that the struggles for indigenous peoples remains. There are key isolated highlights initiatives in Southern Africa that one are able to build off on. However, fundamentally these communities continue to struggle for the recognition through the resources as a cultural community, for proper inclusion and for development approaches to meaningfully include the priorities.

Video:

These fundamental historical challenges remains. It continues attention. It remains a challenge for us to see how UNDRIP can live locally, especially at the level of interpretation.

Video:

I would want to say that ARISA is critically important. There are not many institutions giving institutional support at the level it needs. I want to ask that its support continues. Thank you.

Rita Spadafora:

Many thanks to the ARISA and [inaudible 00:58:43] project presenters sharing their experience with regional projects. The last case studies to be showcased today will be community-driven projects within indigenous peoples. The first project is the Forest Alliance activity of the USAID/Peru mission. Our presenter will be Marioldy Sánchez, project manager of the Forest Alliance and associate of AIDER, USAID implementing partner. We would also like to thank Alvaro Gaillour, USAID/Peru environmental governance specialist who manages this activity, and [Marisela Jen 00:59:11] for her support. Marioldy, you're next.

Marioldy Sánchez:

Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to share with all of you this experience. The Forest Alliance is an initiative implemented by AIDER. We are a Peruvian NGO with more than 30 years of experience promoting sustainable forest management. We will start this presentation by a short video showing the objectives of the Forest Alliance and its expected impacts.

Marioldy Sánchez:

Thank you. Well, the Forest Alliance is implemented under GDA mechanism through an innovative alliance between indigenous communities, civil society, the private sector and international

cooperation. It is located, as you can see on the map, in the Peruvian Amazon and directly engages seven communities from two indigenous people's groups. The purpose of the activity [inaudible 01:02:06] at empowering indigenous peoples to lead the sustainable management of their forest as the main way to achieve their development and to contribute to the wellbeing of society. Next slide, please.

Marioldy Sánchez:

In order to address the threats of deforestation to indigenous people, the Forest Alliance is supporting communities in the development of a comprehensive proposal for communal forest management which integrates social, economic and environmental dimensions. This conceptual model was co-created under a partnership between communities and AIDER that started in 2000.

Marioldy Sánchez:

Land governance and tenure security are fundamental social aspects that are being strengthened as part of this proposal. This is making possible for the communities involved to reduce deforestation caused by external agents, conserving their natural capital and allowing them the development of a REDD+ mechanism from which the communities are channeling financing from the private sector into their communities. These financial resources are being invested not only in forest management activities, but also in enterprises such as agroforestry and handcrafting, as you can see in the video we just play, and through their own indigenous company [inaudible 01:03:28]. The development of these enterprises in harmony with nature and with a business approach is adding also other partners and contributing to financial sustainability of a communal forest management model.

Marioldy Sánchez:

Our experience is showing that indigenous communities themselves are capable of leading their own vision of development and through these, also contributing—this is very important—to the mitigation of the climate change effects. They are strategic allies for climate change management in the country. Now, to finalize, I think it's important to listen directly from the indigenous people's leaders the progress made with the support of AIDER and the Forest Alliance activity. Please.

Video:

[Spanish 01:04:17].

Video:

[foreign language 01:06:21].

Marioldy Sánchez:

Well, thank you very much for the opportunity to share our experience. As Diana just said in her own native language, let's continue joining efforts for indigenous forest conservation. Thank you very much. We are available for interaction and questions. Thank you again.

Rita Spadafora:

Many thanks, Marioldy Sánchez and Nilder Fernandez and Diana Mori for their testimonials. To finish with the case studies, we will have USAID/Nepal presenting their Paani program. I'm happy to introduce Kashmira Kakati, environment specialist at USAID/Nepal; Nilu Basnyat, chief of party of the USAID Paani program with the DAI Global and Bandana Awasthi, watershed management specialist with the USAID

Paani program. We would also like to thank Dhansari Raji. She is a young indigenous woman that will share a testimony of empowerment and hope with us. Welcome, Kashmira.

Kashmira Kakati:

Thank you, Rita. Namaste to everyone. Good morning and good evening. I'm Kashmira Kakati from USAID/Nepal. I'm very pleased to be sharing with you one aspect of our pioneering Program for Aquatic Natural Resources Improvement natural resources, improvement or Paani, which means water in Nepali.

Kashmira Kakati:

Paani started in 2016 and will be ending soon. Paani's focus was the conservation of freshwater biodiversity and better climate change adaptation in Western Nepal. What Paani did was take a watershed approach to address threats to biodiversity and invested both in the science to support decision-making and in establishing grassroots governance of lakes, rivers and wetlands. It partnered with communities and local governments, through which it set up a river stretch co-management model along the lines of Nepal's famous community forestry program.

Kashmira Kakati:

Now, Paani's work with water meant that it connected most closely with indigenous river-dependent communities who happen to be among the more marginalized groups in Nepal. One among them is Dhansari Raji. We are excited to bring Dhansari's voice to you. She has an amazing story to tell. But before we reach the river, let me hand the virtual mic to Nilu Basnyat, Paani's chief of party, to tell you about Paani's work with the indigenous people of Nepal. Thank you. Nilu?

Nilu Basnyat:

Thank you, Kashmira. Next slide. Hello and namaste. Greetings from Nepal. I'm happy to share Paani project's results on indigenous population's engagement on our project.

Nilu Basnyat:

The indigenous population comprised of approximately 36% of Nepal's 31 million population. It has legally recognized 59 indigenous nationalities, referred to as [foreign language 01:09:22]. This graph... [inaudible 01:09:26], can you go back to the previous graph, please?

Nilu Basnyat:

All right, so indigenous people's engagement on Paani. Actually, this graph shows the concerted efforts made by the project to increase participation of the indigenous population. Paani has, in fact, succeeded in doubling their participation from 20% to over 40% in a four-year period. Next slide.

Nilu Basnyat:

We also want to highlight there are 258 key leadership positions in about 86 community conservation groups. These groups are also called community aquatic animal conservation groups. They're supported by Paani. 40% of these positions are held by [foreign language 01:10:11]. Women hold 55% of these positions. Next slide.

Nilu Basnyat:

Paani has also been very successful in engaging 45.5% of [foreign language 01:10:24] in our COVID response activities in 2020 alone. These are some of the highlights of Paani's results in engaging with the indigenous people's population in Nepal. Now, I'd like to invite Bandana Awasthi, Paani's watershed management specialist, to introduce our star community partner, Dhansari Raji. [foreign language 01:10:47].

Bandana Awasthi:

Thank you, ma'am. Hello, everyone. Namaste. My name is Bandana, watershed management specialist in Nepal Paani program. Today, we have Dhansari Raji with us. She would like to say hello. To start with an introduction, can I please have [inaudible 01:11:07] video?

Bandana Awasthi:

Dhansari Raji is 22 years old from the village [Raga 01:11:18] in Western Nepal. Her village is near the bank of Bheri River. She belongs to an indigenous Raji community.

Bandana Awasthi:

(singing)

Bandana Awasthi:

The Rajis are only 0.01% of Nepal's total population, with total population [inaudible 01:11:42] of just over 4,000 members. They are one of Nepal's endangered and economically-deprived indigenous groups. Traditionally, they have been dependent on fishing and rowing boats for food and income. Their lives and livelihoods are threatened by decline in fish stock caused by unsustainable infrastructure development and increased [inaudible 01:12:05] natural disasters.

Bandana Awasthi:

Dhansari has had a hard life. At a young age, she had to step up to help her family trying to make ends meet by fishing and rowing boats. In 2019, she was one of six youth in Raji community to train as river rafting guide in a 14-day rafting guide training organized by USAID Paani program. Now, she is the first licensed Raji river rafting guide in Nepal.

Bandana Awasthi:

Dhansari may be shy to talk to strangers, but she's very strong and courageous young woman who takes on not just the river, but the very perception of rafting guide as a male-dominated sport. As an assistant rafting guide, Dhansari now leads rafting trips on the river she has grown up next to, earning a decent living for herself and for her family. She's also challenging the notion of what women of her community can or cannot do. Today, we have Dhansari with us to share her story of success and struggle. Thank you.

Video:

[foreign language 01:13:13].

Rita Spadafora:

Many thanks to USAID/Peru and to USAID/Nepal for putting together this beautiful and inspiring video to finish with this section of the webinar. It was a pleasure for me to be with all of you today. Now,

before we finish this webinar, we ask Luis-Felipe Duchicela, USAID's senior indigenous peoples advisor, to say some final words. Over to you, Luis-Felipe.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

Thank you very much, Rita. First of all, I want to thank you, Rita, for your excellent work in hosting, facilitating this webinar. Special thanks to all the presenters, all the panelists. You all did a wonderful work. It just reflects the hard work you were doing in your countries. It's just amazing all the work you're doing on the ground, especially with this year of pandemic. Thank you very much for that.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

We will not be able to answer the questions and comments and suggestions, but please be sure that we have noted all of the comments. This session has been recorded and will be available for you to go over again and to go back to it and learn from what the projects are doing.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

I would like to say that for those of you who have asked about when will USAID come and work in certain parts and regions and countries, that's our hope. That's our wish. I think USAID wants to do that. If you please come back on May 18 for the webinar on May 18, we will try to bring people from USAID and from implementing partners and indigenous people's organizations to have a dialogue on how to continue advancing how to strengthen partnership between indigenous peoples and NGOs and more established implementing partners of USAID.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

Just a warm, warm greeting to all our brothers and sisters from the Sahel, from Cambodia, from East Africa, from Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Central Africa. You have posted comments so that I know you're there. [Spanish 01:18:00]. I only have one more minute. I see my friend [Marcia Santa Cruz 01:18:22] here. Big hug to you, Marcia. [Spanish. 01:18:24].

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

I would like to ensure that all of you remain connected. You remain engaged with the new USAID in promoting the rights of indigenous peoples. We have a great framework. It's our friend at USAID. I'm sure that we can use this to improve our work.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

I would like to highlight, finally, that the work that the Indigenous Peoples Alliance for Rights and Development, the IPARD, is going to do. Based in Panama City, great team. Rita's part of that team together with Alejandro Paredes, led by Francisco Souza and other colleagues like [Irma Huanca 01:19:11] and [Carlos Blandon 01:19:11]. You will be hearing more about the IPARD team in the future.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

Thank you all. Thank you to Guatemala. I see that Ajb'ee has been doing a great work over there. Sorry that we didn't have more time. I think we're going to be cut off in case we continue, so we better say goodbye for now.

Luis-Felipe Duchicela:

This transcript was exported on Apr 23, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Again, thank you to our GROW team and our great interpreters. I was listening to some of the interpretations and they're all fine. Soojin, Cheyenne, Mary and everybody else, have a great week. Let's continue to celebrate Earth Week this week. Thank you very much. Bye-bye.