



# INTEGRATION OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE FOR HEALTH DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Mexico City, 30 July - 1 August 2018

## INITIATIVE FOR INCORPORATING TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE INTO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### BACKGROUND

In 2014, within the framework of a consultation about health sector disaster risk reduction in indigenous communities, twenty delegates from ten countries<sup>1</sup> of the Western Hemisphere issued several recommendations for action in the national and international spheres, but particularly in indigenous populations.<sup>i</sup>

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 establishes the need to take advantage of traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices in order to complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and in the preparation and application of policies, strategies, plans, and programs.<sup>ii</sup>

The Member States of the Pan American Health Organization included ethnicity as a cross-cutting aspect in their 2016-2021 Plan of Action for disaster risk reduction, which was approved in 2016.<sup>iii</sup>

### Current Situation

The Western Hemisphere is second only to Asia in terms of experiencing disasters. Around 20.6% of all disasters that occurred in the world between 2007 and 2016 took place in this region, resulting in 255,033 deaths, 898,816 injuries, and damages in excess of 470 billion dollars.<sup>iv</sup>

The most common events were water and climate-related, causing 5.6% of the deaths but more than 73% of the economic losses in this period. Annual losses alone, resulting from earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, high winds, and storm surges, are estimated between 1.2% and 1.7% of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>v</sup>

The Region of the Americas is characterized by being multi-ethnic and multicultural. It is also a region where different indigenous groups, communities, people, and nationalities face systematic discrimination and exclusion from political and economic power and continue to be over-represented among the poorest and most vulnerable segments of society.<sup>vi</sup>

Indigenous populations currently account for around 17% of the people who live in extreme poverty in Latin America, despite being less than 8% of the population.<sup>vii</sup> The greatest inequalities in health and mortality in Latin America and the Caribbean are evident among indigenous and other ethnic groups.<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bolivia, Canada, Dominica, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru



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Climate change “poses an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world,”<sup>ix</sup> endangering access to safe and adequate food and water, the right to health, and the right to housing; furthermore, it exacerbates difficulties faced by indigenous communities. Deforestation and forest fragmentation in the Amazon, Arctic ice melt, rising sea levels, and the acidification of the oceans would pose a risk to indigenous groups when extreme climatic conditions occur.

Indigenous populations are often stripped of their lands and traditional territories and deprived of the resources needed for their survival—both physical and cultural—which further weakens their ability to cope with natural and man-made phenomena.<sup>x</sup>

## PROBLEM

1. The benefits and the need to incorporate traditional indigenous knowledge into disaster risk reduction practices have been documented for several years now. International instruments reflect the clear intent to prioritize work on indigenous populations and disaster risk reduction. However, in practice, it is limited, and the work that is done is usually confined to small communities, and not widely disseminated.<sup>xi</sup>
2. Disaster risk reduction planning and policies have for decades sidelined indigenous populations and their in-depth knowledge. The specific particularities of indigenous populations are not included in the disaster risk reduction strategies of Latin American countries.
3. There have been countless efforts to include ethnic approaches to disaster risk reduction, particularly in indigenous populations. However, in practice, not many professionals are trained on the issue, and even more seriously, the available information is either inaccessible or does not incorporate particular elements.

## Possible causes

1. Lack of access to information to support the integration of indigenous people’s needs and forms of knowledge into disaster risk reduction planning efforts. A critical aspect is the limited evidence at all levels; therefore, practice is confined to local experiences that are not adequately disseminated.
2. Limited support to ensure that those developing and implementing disaster risk reduction strategies routinely consider and include indigenous knowledge in their approaches.
3. Lack of guidelines and good practices among indigenous communities, health systems and disaster risk management systems.



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## STRUCTURE OF THE INITIATIVE AND PROPOSED SOLUTION (EXPECTED RESULTS 2017–2021)

GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS		MANDATES OF THE MEMBER STATES		OBJECTIVES OF THE INITIATIVE	2017-2021 EXPECTED RESULTS
2030 Agenda	Sendai Framework for DRR 2015--2030	Plan of Action for DRR 2016-2021	Policy on ethnicity and health 2017		
UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Understand the disaster risk	S.L.A. 1 Knowledge of disaster risk in the health sector	Complementarity Traditional Medicine and Ancestral Generation of Evidence	1.Promote the integration of traditional indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge for disaster risk reduction	1.1. A Network for the integration of indigenous knowledge into active and established DRR 1.2. At least one research protocol in disaster risk management and indigenous populations developed and carried out
	Increase disaster preparedness in order to respond effectively and “rebuild better” in the areas of recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.	S.L.A. 4 Strengthening of capacities for preparation, response, and recovery in the health sector	Social participation and strategic partnerships  Training at all levels	2.Develop competences in health workers and other related actors to boost the capacity of indigenous populations to prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters	2.1. A training program, materials, and resources developed for the integration of traditional indigenous knowledge into disaster risk management

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<sup>iv</sup> OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database. EM-DAT. Reviewed: January 26th 2017

<sup>v</sup> Wallemacq P. CRED CRUNCH (2016), What is the human cost of weather-related disasters (1995-2015)? [Internet]. Brussels (Belgium): CRED; 2016 in: <http://cred.be/sites/default/files/CredCrunch42.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Organization of American States/Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (OAS/ IACHR). The Situation of People of African Descent in the Americas [Internet], OAS/ Ser.L/ V/ II. Doc. 62, para. 255. Available at: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/afro-descendants/docs/pdf/AFROS\\_2011\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/afro-descendants/docs/pdf/AFROS_2011_ENG.pdf)



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<sup>x</sup> Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Report of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous People's Issues Annual Meeting (E/C.19/013/4, paragraph 2).

<sup>xi</sup> Mercer, Jessica & Cols. Framework for integrating indigenous and scientific knowledge for disaster risk reduction. 2009