



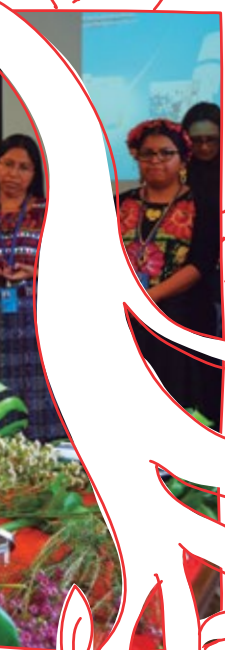
2000/2020





20

YEARS
*of Collective
Workforce*





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PRESENTATION

We never stop. We go from one place to the next with our smiling faces, our bright-coloured skirts fluttering in the wind. With our hair in a diversity of colours and styles, mirror of our unconquerable souls, we never tire of giving, fighting, loving and creating. We are women, to great honour. We let ourselves be guided by our intuition and wisdom. We are brave, maternal and loving.

In many cases, being indigenous means that we are seen through the lens of prejudice. For ourselves and for others, we are the guardians of ancestral knowledge, caretakers of Mother Earth, protectors and transmitters of our cultures and our people. We are considered as "poor" and have suffered violences since time immemorial. They tried to cut our wings and we protected ourselves with the honey of our ancient songs, with the words of our ancestors who remind us to never give up.

Our diverse skins, mirroring each continent, contain vibrant hearts and bones that know of pain and indifference. That is why we defend our identity, language, customs, beliefs, and way of life. We are untamed, rebellious. We know about medicine because we have been observing and listening to the water, the earth, the fire and the wind from a very young age. On those calm afternoons that precede the storms, we sing our songs. Our existence is meaningful because it is intertwined with that of past and future generations. We know how to listen and shout, to sing and be silent, to talk and dance, until we transform into rivers of energy and hope. We are a blazing fire gaining ground.

We are interconnected, because we are stronger together. Because what happens to one of us happens to all of us. We are a single heart that flourishes with proposals of peace to overcome violence.

There are 476 million Indigenous People living in over 90 countries. We make up 6% of the world's population. According to the World Bank, we represent about 15% of all people living in extreme poverty.

During the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, as we approved the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women, we laid the foundations for our demands as Indigenous People and as women.

The founders of the International Forum of Indigenous Women, the regional networks, the organizations and the women leaders all emerge from a kaleidoscopic awakening that led to the consolidation of FIMI as a global reference mechanism promoting the leadership and individual and collective rights of Indigenous Women from local to global.



For 20 years now, FIMI has served as a bridge to mobilize and facilitate the necessary human and financial resources for initiatives led by and for Indigenous Women at all levels. These were two decades of working with holistic approaches, intersectionalities, self-determination, empowerment, active participation, indivisibility, the collective dimension, creativity and personal development.

To celebrate our anniversary, we have designed this book that tells the story, for the first time, of FIMI's foundation, spanning from 1995 to 2020. It also presents us with 13 life stories of women leaders who work for the collective and have gone through the Forum's leadership programs. Among them is Shapla from Bangladesh; Judy from Papua New Guinea; Stephanie Big Crow from North America; Belén Itahi from Mexico; or Alice from Kenya. Each one faces different challenges in their work to preserve the principle of Good Living within their communities.

FIMI, 20 years of Collective Construction presents the progress made by Indigenous Women in the exercise of our individual and collective rights; in the recognition of our identity; in the cultivation of our spirituality; in the respect and preservation of our languages; and in the defence of land and territory.

The book shows how change is possible through grassroots initiatives for the 238.4 million Indigenous Women, representing 6.2% of the world's female population, because Indigenous Women are agents of change and masters of their own destinies.

After 20 years of dreaming and walking together, I can't think of anything that would make me happier than to be presenting this book, so that our Indigenous Girls and Young Women may now keep forging ahead with this collective construction for a life free of violences.

Tarcila Rivera Zea

Presidenta del Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas

INTRODUCTION



Indigenous Women creating our own path

This book is a tribute to those who have started on a path and, at the same time, the awareness that collective work makes us stronger to build a world where Girls, Young Women and Indigenous Women realize their dreams and can be part of equally, overcoming all types of violence.

The history of the fight for individual and collective rights is not a recent one. It pertains to each and every woman who has led it. Women in urban, semi-urban and rural communities. Women from their kitchens, through words, at school, in the workplace or in decision-making spaces. We have formed a movement that goes together with the movement of Indigenous Peoples, with an approach focusing on human rights through our cosmovision (or in our particular way of viewing the world).

Micaela Bastidas (1744-781); Bartolina Sisa, Aymara of Bolivia (1750-1782); Zitkála-Sá, Lakota of North America (1876-1936); Gladys Elphick (1904-1988), a descendant of the Kaurua and Ngadjuri communities of Australia; Njinga Mbandi (1583-1663), of the Mbundu People, in southwest Africa; Petra Macliing (1934-2018), Bontoc, from the Philippines, and many more, part of our heritage, the legacy that we are going to narrate, taking as a starting point the 1990s.

At that time, the regions of Africa, the Arctic, Asia, the Pacific, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean experienced social instability due to armed conflicts and economic crises. Even with a bleak outlook, indigenous activism remained constant. To mention a few war and economic conflicts: in Asia, China recovered the British colony of Hong Kong in 1997 and the Portuguese colony of Macau in 1999. In Africa, the Second Congo War was taking place, and in 1994 the Rwandan genocide was starting. In 1992, Somalia was going through a civil war. In Peru, the Shining Path, an armed group, was still active and Alberto Fujimori was reelected. In Guatemala, in 1996, the civil war that had begun in 1960 came to an end.

The global economy was facing a crisis increasing the exclusion of Indigenous Peoples, and impacting their quality of life. For this reason, during the first year of the 1990's, the Indigenous Peoples' Movement focused on cementing the recognition of their rights at an international level, encouraging the creation of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. This initiative was born during the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, held in 1993²², and became a reality in the year 2000.

In 1992, the Indigenous Peoples' movement got organized against colonialism as the world celebrated its 500 years of invasion.

22. Historical Process at the United Nations: <https://www.docip.org/en/oral-history-and-memory/historical-process/>

Despite the efforts mentioned above, at that time Indigenous Women were living in a world dominated by multinational corporations, who influenced governments to legislate and to implement 'development' programs, destroying our lands, our culture and lifestyles.



It was precisely in 1995, when Indigenous Women participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. A milestone in the coordination of the Indigenous Women's Movement and also for the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI). It was in Beijing that we were able to establish a political platform at the international level and to reach a consensus on a Declaration criticizing the neoliberal system.

After 20 years, FIMI is a solid global platform that connects women from the seven socio-cultural regions with four strategic programs: Political Participation and Advocacy, Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women, Research and Issues of Impact, and the AYNÍ Indigenous Women's Fund. In addition, we have worked on the intersectionality on violence, the indivisibility of individual and collective rights, as well as on reviving ancestral and healing knowledge.

It has not been easy to achieve this, overcoming very difficult obstacles, such as gender inequality, discrimination, rising violence, militarization of indigenous territories, criminalization of activists and environmental challenges. There are difficulties of all kinds, from the geographic conditions where Indigenous Women live, to the lack of financial and technical resources.

FIMI's motto has always been " Anything that is about us, must be with us". Thus, this book gives an overview, through stories of change, narrated by its protagonists, about FIM's contributions to the Women's and Indigenous Peoples' Movement.

It is a good time to take a break in our journey. To observe with love and respect the cycle of sowing, to determine whether it is necessary to stir the soil to allow it to breathe, to fertilize, to fallow, to revolve or to save the seeds; to read the waters and the winds and, together, to continue building a fairer, more equitable, egalitarian and respectful world for Indigenous Peoples.

The journey of the International Indigenous Women's Forum



"We, the daughters of Mother Earth, the Indigenous Women [...], have come together to collectively decide what we can do to bring about a world which we would like our children and our children's children to live in".

~ Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women, September 7th 1995

For hundreds of years, Indigenous women have played an important role by being leading actors of change in our communities, looking for peace and justice, defending our individual and collective rights. Slowly, we

have extended our influence nationally and internationally, becoming key protagonists in the Indigenous Peoples' fight.

We started to raise our specific concerns as women within the Indigenous Peoples' Movement. Within this collective effort, we have identified international spaces for political influence, and this has allowed us to spread our voice from the local to the global level in order to ensure the well-being of our peoples with dignity, equality and freedom.

In 1982, the United Nations (UN) appointed the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, a subsidiary body of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, in Geneva, Switzerland. In this Working Group, and for the first time at the global level, we became politically involved. We shared experiences and raised our concerns and ideas.

In parallel, Indigenous Women, We organized our own conferences and meetings, among them the first Indigenous Women's Conference in Australia in 1989, the International Indigenous Women's Conference in Karasjok, Norway, in 1990, and the International Indigenous Women's Conference in Aotearoa, New Zealand, in 1993 (Dahl, 2009)²³.

The 1995 Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women summarizes our thoughts and dreams: *We, the daughters of Mother Earth, the Indigenous women present at the NGO Forum of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, have come together to collectively decide what we can do to bring about a world which we would like our children and our children's children to live in. We acknowledge and build upon earlier declarations which evolved from earlier meetings and conferences, like the 1990 Declaration of the Second International Indigenous Women's Conference, the Kari-Oca Declaration of 1992, and those of various regional conferences of Indigenous*

23. The Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls in the Framework of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA), FIMI 2020: <https://fimi-iiwf.org/the-global-study-on-the-situation-of-indigenous-women-and-girls/?lang=en>

women, and the consultations and conferences done in preparation for this Beijing Conference [...] We stand in unity behind this "1995 Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women" which is the fruit of our collective efforts to understand the world and our situation as Indigenous women, critique the Draft Platform for Action, and articulate our demands to the international community, the governments, and the NGO's²⁴.

Beijing, 1995: Fourth World Conference on Women, the origin of an idea

It was during the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, that the need and idea to create an International Indigenous Women's forum was born. There, Indigenous Women from all around the world met to share ideas and formulate recommendation, and it became clear that there is a need for global coordination of this great diversity²⁵. Lucy Mulenkei, founder and Vice President of FIMI, recalls the major challenges faced by Indigenous Women during their participation at the conference "our voices were not heard at that time, and we were marginalized". The percentage of Indigenous Women participants was 1% of the total number of civil society delegates. Indigenous Women were not present in all the dialogue and negotiations tables and therefore their propositions were not included.

The International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) is part of a global effervescent decade for the defense of women's rights. Dr. Elsa Stamatopoulou, Director of the Indigenous Studies Program at Columbia University, says: "The 1990s represent the moment when the women's rights movement became a major issue. As seen in the 1993 Vienna Declaration, *Women's Rights are also Human Rights*. The Indigenous

24. Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women, 1995

25. <https://internationalfund.org/member-highlight-international-indigenous-womens-forum/>

Women's movement began to gain strength in the 1970s, and by the time they went to Beijing, they were strong"²⁶.

But although the idea of FIMI was born, it was still four years away from becoming a reality.

Lima, 1999: From an idea to a collective dream

For a seed to blossom, the energy of fire, wind, water and earth are combined in such a way that the will and heart of the people contribute to a collective dream such as the International Indigenous Women's Forum.

Tarcila Rivera Zea,²⁷ Quechua from Peru, founder and President of FIMI, recalls that from a very early age she observed that Indigenous Peoples' processes were dominated by men. This led her to "break through" the gender gap in the movement and she highlights an important moment for FIMI as to be the meeting "Indigenous Women Facing the New Millennium: an International Working Group", which took place from November 24 to December 2, 1999 in Lima, Peru.

This meeting brought more strength and life to our collective dream of having a global platform called the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI). Indigenous Women from various countries around the world participated: Kenya, Algeria, Norway, Philippines, Canada, United States, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Peru. The group focused on sharing strategic information on ongoing international initiatives, such as the draft Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS); the reviews of the UN International Conferences and Programs of Action of

26. Professor Elsa Stamatopoulou, phone interview conducted by Binalakshmi Nepram on April 13, 2020.

27. Interview with Tarcila Rivera Zea by Binalakshmi Nepram via Zoom on April 24, 2020

Cairo +5, to be held in 1999; Beijing +5 to be held in 2000; the creation of the Permanent Forum and the World Conference on Racism in 2001²⁸.

For the UN Special Session on Beijing +5, our indigenous sisters agreed to host an earlier conclave with the participation of 100 women in New York to receive training on how the UN works and how to participate actively during the Assembly. An International Indigenous Women's Steering Committee was formed: Bernice See, Asian Indigenous Women's Network; Lucy Mulenkei, African Indigenous Women's Organization; Jorun Eijkjok, Arctic Indigenous Women's Network; Dr. Larissa Behrendt, South Pacific; Esther Camac, the Continental Network of Indigenous Women; Fay Blaney, Aboriginal Women's Action Network and National Action Committee on the Status of Women; and Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie (Assembly of First Nations).

Lea Nicholas Mackenzie coordinated the process in preparation for Beijing +5, a feminist space. Lea recalls that many letters were written to donors, requesting funding. The first financial support received was from Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations in Canada²⁹.

At this stage we were able to agree on the creation of a logo that represents global unity and diversity. Since then and until today, this logo identifies FIMI. It was designed by the artist Johanna Lazore, a member of the Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne, Canada. It shows two Indigenous women holding the universe. They represent duality, the forces of Good and Evil part of everything and in control of humanity's actions. The inner edge of the circle is a symbol that can be seen on the bottom of the skirts of the Iroquois Women of Canada. On the inside of the drawing, a dark stripe represents trees, a symbol of life and peace among the diverse cultures of the world. The blue color in the center is an open sky and the seven

28. "Indigenous Women Create New International Organization", Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie, Indigenous Affairs, No.3 July - August - September - 2000

29. "Indigenous Women Create New International Organization", Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie, Indigenous Affairs, No.3 July - August - September - 2000

stars are the socio-cultural regions of the planet, the seven campfires of the ancestors who have been watching us for seven generations. At the center of the universe stands Grandmother Moon. She controls the tides of the oceans and decides the arrival of all new life.

Thus, in 2000, we held the Indigenous Women's Caucus in New York, as part of Beijing +5. Main women leaders participated: Mary Jane Jim (Aishihik First Nations, Canada), Rose Cunningham (Miskitu, Nicaragua), Elder Lorraine Canoe (Mohawk, United States), Dr. Larissa Behrendt (Kamillaroi, Australia), Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie (Maliseet First Nation, Canada), Susana Fried (United Nations Development Fund for Women), Carol Kalafatic (International Indian Treaty Council), Victoria Tauli Corpuz (Igorot, Philippines), Tarcila Rivera Zea (Quechua, Peru), Lucy Mulenkei Maasai from Kenya, Monica Aleman (Miskitu, Nicaragua), among others.

During the conclave, we discussed key advocacy issues for Beijing+5 review. We also made suggestions in direct line with the development of our international network. We agreed that the International Indigenous Women's Forum will remain an organization where we can share information and then the following Steering Committee members were appointed: Lucy Mulenkei (Africa), Bernice See (Asia), Marion Hansen (South Pacific), Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie (Coordinator/North America), Fay Blaney (North America), Tarcila Rivera Zea (Latin America), Jorunn Eikjok (Europe/Arctic).

The Steering Committee began its work by agreeing on the direction to follow. According to Tarcila Rivera Zea, this period is the furrow where FIMI's mission was sown: "to bring together Indigenous Women leaders and activists from all over of the world, to agree on agendas, to articulate objectives, to build skills and develop leadership during international decision-making processes on human rights"³⁰.

30. E-mail interview with Tarcila Rivera Zea on January 9, 2019 conducted by FIMI.

We also agreed on strategic spaces for participation, such as the World March of Women in 2000; and the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001. One of the strategies we agreed to pursue was to share information with as many Indigenous women as possible³¹.

New York, 2000: the Global Voice of Indigenous Women at Beijing +5.

Our unity and organizational strength at the global level made advocacy possible, in such a way that the document "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action" of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly mentioned Indigenous Women in six paragraphs:

100 e. Address the barriers faced by women, particularly by indigenous and other marginalized women, in accessing and participating in politics and decisionmaking, including lack of training, women's double burden of paid and unpaid work, negative societal attitudes and stereotypes;

103 g. Take concrete steps, as a priority and with their full and voluntary participation, to address the impact of violence on indigenous women in order to implement appropriate, effective programmes and services to eliminate all forms of violence;

106 a. Consider adopting, where appropriate, national legislation consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity¹² to protect the knowledge, innovations and practices of women in indigenous and local communities relating to traditional medicines, biodiversity and indigenous technologies;

31. "Indigenous Women Create New International Organization", Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie, Indigenous Affairs, No.3 July - August - September - 2000

126 d. bis. Undertake appropriate data collection and research on indigenous women, with their full participation, in order to foster accessible, culturally and linguistically appropriate policies, programmes and services;

128 h. With the full voluntary participation of indigenous women, develop and implement educational and training programmes that respect their history, culture, spirituality, languages and aspirations and ensure their access to all levels of formal and non-formal education, including higher education;



129 d. Apply and support positive measures to give all women, particularly indigenous women, equal access to capacity-building and training programmes to enhance their participation in decision-making in all fields and at all levels.

Strategies led by the International Indigenous Women's Steering Committee in preparation for Beijing+5 included daily meetings and the elaboration of a position statement following the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women (1995), and reaffirming the right to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, the relationship to land and territory, and the balance required to ensure the well-being of Indigenous Peoples.

Lucy Mulenkei, founder and Vice-President of FIMI³², feels that at Beijing+5 Indigenous Women found a point of support; the participation

32. Interview with Lucy Mulenkei conducted by Binalakshmi Nepam via zoom on April 16, 2020.

in the prior World Conferences was fundamental. This stage was the beginning of the core of FIMI's mandate, strategies and principles.

New York, 2005: FIMI taking steady steps at Beijing+10

FIMI's presence was notable in 2005, when for the first time in the history of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a specific resolution on Indigenous Women was adopted: "Indigenous women beyond the ten-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action"³³.

Since that year, says Dr. Elsa Stamatopoulou, Indigenous Women have actively participated as key players in each session of the CSW. Thus, FIMI gradually became the global coordinating mechanism, presenting proposals and designing advocacy strategies, always being an organization with clear thoughts and ideas³⁴.

Tarcila Rivera Zea explains that Indigenous Women arrived at the CSW sessions after becoming involved in the processes for the rights of Indigenous Peoples in their countries and local organizations. In the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, legislation from around the world was examined. In this regard, Tarcila Rivera Zea says "we discovered all the mechanisms that exist within the UN, and specifically in relation to women's rights in general, because we come from mixed backgrounds"³⁵.

Natalia Caruso, from the MADRE³⁶ organization, points out that in 2005, the first International Conference on Women was held at the UN Church Center in New York. Ten delegates from North America, Latin America,

33. E/CN.6/2005/11

34. Elsa Stamatopoulou, phone interview conducted by Binalakshmi Nepam on April 13, 2020.

35. Interview with Tarcila Rivera Zea by Binalakshmi Nepam via Zoom on April 24, 2020.

36. MADRE is an international women's human rights organization, partner of FIMI in its management.

Asia, Africa attended and together they presented different strategies³⁷. This was important because it led to the creation of alliances between the Indigenous Women's movement and the global women's movement.

The MADRE Association, under the direction of Vivian Stromberg, was the refuge, in New York, for Indigenous Women during that time, being our ally and friend in the fight for social change. This resulted in financial and human resources for the foundation of FIMI; and specifically, with the support of Natalia Caruso in the Administration.

In 2005, in conjunction with Beijing +10, preparations continued for the Study of the United Nations' Secretary-General: "Ending Violence against Women: From Words to Action"³⁸. MADRE was part of the Working Group as a non-governmental organization³⁹, and enabled FIMI's 2006 report, entitled Mairin Iwanka Raya, to be considered as material for the study on violence against women. FIMI's leadership and work, as a global platform, is beginning to bear fruit.

A platform for action: the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

Tarcila Rivera Zea points out that sometimes we do not receive the attention we expect from the UN bodies. However, the Permanent Forum has been a space for participation and presentation of recommendations to the states; for exchange and advocacy with the permanent missions and Special Rapporteurs of the UN and alliances of different types.

We made a great effort in mobilizing and bringing people from our communities to New York, facing language barriers and visa requirements,

37. Natalia Caruso, interview conducted by Binalakshmi Nepram via zoom on April 23, 2020.

38. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Media/Publications/UN/en/EnglishStudy.pdf>

39. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Media/Publications/UN/en/EnglishStudy.pdf>

but we arrived with clear ideas, concrete recommendations and a desire to transform the realities we live in our countries.

Throughout this process initiated by the Permanent Forum, we have met important leaders who have contributed to the advocacy and participation of FIMI and the Indigenous Women of the different regions: Elsa Stamatopoulou, Chandra Kalindi Roy-Henriksen (from the Chakma people of Bangladesh), Mirian Masaquiza (Kichwa, from Ecuador), and experts such as Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Kankanaey Igorot, from the Philippines), Myrna Cunningham (Miskitu, from Nicaragua), Mariam Wallet (Tuareg, from Mali), Anne Nuorgam (Sami, from Finland), Tarcila Rivera Zea (Quechua, from Peru), Joan Carling (Igorot, from the Philippines) and María Eugenia Choque (Aymara, from Bolivia). They have contributed to strengthening women's leadership in this space and promoting gender equality within the Indigenous Peoples' movement in order to be included in the recommendations.

The establishment of the UNPFII⁴⁰ is a milestone for Indigenous Women, a platform to express our concerns and a framework to promote inclusive policies, based on individual and collective rights.

2008 to 2011: The foundations of our house.

FIMI's internal development has been a self-paced process. After several contributions made in international decision-making spaces, we elaborated the first Strategic Plan for the 2008-2011 period. This served to formalize the creation of our programs and our work methodology, based on the analysis of opportunities, strengths and priorities regarding Indigenous Women at the local, national, regional and international levels.

40. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was created as an advisory body to the UN Economic and Social Council in 2000 and held its first session at UN headquarters in New York in 2002.

Participation is a right and a necessity; we have constantly raised this issue in different spheres, so that the *Political Participation and Advocacy Program* was designed to facilitate and generate spaces for concerted action for full and effective international advocacy. Fabiola del Jurado, from the Náhuatl people of Mexico, delegate of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas, during the Eleventh session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil 2010), supported us on the importance of participation in decision making spaces *"This is the first time I am attending an international event where consensus is sought in order to make recommendations. For me it was impressive to see how they discuss and agree on agreements. During these days, I was able to understand how things were negotiated and spoken in a very fine way, and how each of the moments is right for it"*.

For participation and advocacy, we need leadership training. The "Beijing Declaration of the Indigenous Women of the World" of 1995 set as one of the main challenges, the recognition of the rights of our territories, our development, our health and also education. This is the reason to be of the *Capacity Building program*. One of the first initiatives of this program was the training of one hundred Indigenous Women leaders in law, management and political participation, in order to increase their participation within the different political spaces during the Bolivian elections in 2009. This process was implemented by the National Confederation of Indigenous Peasant Women of Bolivia - Bartolina Sisa (CNMCIQB-BS).

In 2009, FIMI signed a two-year cooperation agreement with the Indigenous Fund and the Indigenous Intercultural University to integrate a gender approach in capacity building programs through a certificate for Indigenous Women.

After these first steps, in March 2011, in Mexico, FIMI organized the workshop entitled "Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women: progress and challenges for its implementation". Since then, the Global

Leadership School and its International Program on Human Rights and Advocacy Strategies were launched.

From our holistic perspective, we believe that in order to participate and strengthen leadership, we need access to resources. For this reason, we decided to influence the transformation of philanthropy towards responsibility and the opportunity to promote social justice, recognizing the abysmal difficulty for Indigenous Women's collectives to access economic resources.

In 2009, FIMI created the AYNÍ Indigenous Women's Fund, launching the first call through the Seeds Program, focusing on the institutional and organizational empowerment of Indigenous Women. The particularity of this philanthropic arm is to recognize local indigenous knowledge and practices as the basis for the sustainability of their projects at the community level. "AYNÍ" is an indigenous Quechua/Kichua word, from the southern region of the Americas, which stands for reciprocity, solidarity, joint, equitable and fair work, both between human beings and beings of the cosmos (animals, plants, stars). It is the first and only fund created and directed by and for Indigenous Women.

AYNÍ's growth has been the result of our alliances with the philanthropic community, international cooperation institutions and allied governments. In 2011, a second grant mechanism was implemented which is the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF), financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); FIMI's role is to manage the material and financial resources for Latin America and the Caribbean.

We also identified participatory research and advocacy as strategic needs. In 2010, with the support of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Mexican Society for Women's Rights (SEMILLA), and the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), FIMI organized the second meeting of Latin American Experts on Violence against Indigenous Women, held in Mexico City. During the

meeting, they identified the need to create an Observatory of Indigenous Women against Violence, the ancestor of the Research Program on Issues of Impact on the Lives of Indigenous Women. The objective of this observatory is to monitor and make visible violence against Indigenous Women of all types, promoting the compliance with international Human Rights commitments.



The need to look internally in order to contribute to FIMI's sustainability, growth, visibility and organizational development, led to the implementation of the Institutional Reinforcement program, to raise awareness and to form alliances with the donor community. It was important to demonstrate the managerial abilities of both FIMI and our member organizations. In 2008, with the help of MADRE as a fiscal sponsor, we were able to obtain the support of five donors: Oxfam Novib, Hivos, Global Fund for Women, UNIFEM. They invested in the Indigenous Women's Fund, Political Participation and general guidance for institutional strengthening.

In 2009, and for the first time, FIMI received important funding, well beyond its usual average budget of US\$100,000. FIMI managed a budget of US\$863,671 thanks to contributions from UNIFEM- Fund for

Gender Equality, FORD Foundation, HIVOS, MADRE, Channel Foundation, SEMILLAS, UNFPA, GTZ and IBIS. However, economic growth was difficult to maintain in 2010, when the funding was abruptly reduced back to a total of US\$166,000.

The members of the technical team were divided between New York, Nicaragua and Colombia. The members of the Board of Directors were in Peru, Canada, Kenya and the Philippines, which represented great challenges to build a global platform. After 10 years, FIMI took an important step towards its development with its registration as an organization in Lima, Peru, notarized in 2011.

The Directive Board was composed of Tarcila Rivera Zea (Quechua of Peru), President; Lucy Mulenkei (Maasai of Kenya), Vice President; Lea Nicolas Mackenzie (Maliseet First Nation of Canada), Treasurer; Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Kankana-ey Igorot of the Philippines), Secretary; Monica Aleman (Miskitu of Nicaragua), Fiscal. The latter served as Executive Director from 2004 to 2010.

2012 - 2015: Building our house

FIMI as a legal entity, led to the formulation of a Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, with the objective of accompanying and responding to the challenges faced by Indigenous Women around the world based on a global vision. The implementation was under the direction of Otilia Lux de Coti, Maya K'iché, activist for the rights of Indigenous Women and educator, who held the position of the Executive Director of FIMI from 2012 to 2014, together with Mariana López, as Program Coordinator

During FIMI's first ten years of history, we made gradual progress in our advocacy work before international bodies, succeeding in including some of the priorities related to Indigenous Women in resolutions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). However, achieving

Indigenous Women's claims recognition remained a great challenge. This pushed us to organize, together, with the regional networks of Indigenous Women and FIMI, the Global Conference of Indigenous Women held in Lima, Peru, in October 2013. Indigenous Women from the seven socio-cultural regions of the world expressed their political desire to act in accordance with consensus and using the common criteria of the United Nations' processes in relation to Indigenous Peoples, such as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, Cairo+20, Beijing+20, and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

During the Lima Conference, Indigenous Women agreed on a final document entitled "Political Position Document and Plan of Action of the World's Indigenous Women". The document insists on the desire and need of Indigenous Women to participate in political processes that affect us, and endorses the slogan "Nothing about us without us", introducing a new group voice: "Everything about us, with us". By doing so, we reaffirm our opposition to the exclusion and lack of visibility that we have suffered historically in all political participation spaces.

We submitted our recommendations to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and managed to incorporate four paragraphs addressing our rights. Once again, the experience of global coordination has led us to important results; however, we are facing an important challenge regarding national advocacy, as Tarcila Rivera Zea explains "if this information does not fall under the management and use of the organized women themselves, it will not be of great importance. It will remain in an official document known only by experts, and not by the actors themselves who should normally be the ones making an impact on politics in their countries".

To address this challenge, in 2013 we resumed, with more determination, the implementation of the Global Leadership School and created the International Human Rights and Advocacy Strategies Program. The main reason is to strengthen the skills and leadership of Indigenous Women from

local organizations, giving them tools to access, participate and influence both at high international levels and the politics of their countries.



The Program is characterized by the development of mutual knowledge sharing, the practical application of learning and partnership opportunities at the international level. It includes three stages: the first phase is virtual, the second consists of in-person seminars at the UN headquarters and Columbia University, New York. The third stage is the implementation of the Advocacy Plans, that each participant formulates, financed by the Indigenous Women's Fund.

The partnership built with Columbia University and the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has been crucial, as it has given us the opportunity to interact with international educators, UN officials, ambassadors and indigenous leaders. During the in-person seminars, participants learn how to prepare statements and how to participate at the Permanent Forum sessions. It has also been a good opportunity to establish dialogues with government officials of their countries; to create alliances between Indigenous Women and at the same time with important stakeholders of the international community, as well as to organize advocacy events.

At this time, we decided to promote research and analysis from our own perspectives. The Indigenous Women's Observatory, created in 2010, was the starting point for the Research and Issues of Impact on the Lives of Indigenous Women. In 2013, we developed, as a group, an Intercultural Research Manual: Dialogues on Violence against Indigenous Women.

Also in 2013, FIMI launched the "Leadership Award", awarding Indigenous Women part of Indigenous or Tribal Peoples' communities. It is a way to reward committed and responsible leaders who have achieved significant collective goals.

Between 2011-2015, FIMI received generous donations from IFAD-IPAF, Ford Foundation, UNIFEM now UN Women, Channel Foundation, Christensen Fund, Global Fund for Women, SWIFT Foundation, Tamalpais, MDG Fund, Mamacash and several private donors. However, these financial resources were not regular and were allocated to specific activities and events, which gave FIMI unstable resources to expand its programs and to make a real impact.

2016-2020: Our solid collective house

We started this phase with the clarity that our collective house needed strong foundations in order to continue to grow, to be able to carry on our struggles and to protect the different organizational expressions at the global level. Five years after FIMI's registration in Peru, we were ready to manage our resources directly, to increase them, to strengthen them and make them sustainable. When we talk about resources, we look beyond the financial aspect as we also mean human resources, institutional tools, technical skills, mutual trust, organizational work and alliances. All of this allowed us to consciously cut the umbilical cord with MADRE Association, which saw us grow, accompanied us as a fiscal sponsor for more than 10 years and knew that this step was important for FIMI. Beyond exercising legal representation, it is also a political instrument that gave us a voice towards different stakeholders.

We expanded the AYNÍ Fund in different ways, which has also meant more challenges in providing resources to local and regional organizations. As part of the International Network of Women's Funds-Prospera, FIMI was invited in 2016 to be part of a Consortium formed by the Southern Women's Fund, the Asian Women's Fund and the African Women's Development

Fund. Together we designed and initiated the implementation of the Leading from the South (LDS) Program, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We were able to finance more organizations and increase our geographical coverage. This is how, for example, we began to work with indigenous sisters in the French-speaking region of Africa, and how we resumed our activities in the Pacific and Arctic regions.

We were moving towards one of our greatest dreams: conducting our own community research. As part of the Program for Research and Issues of Impact on the Lives of Indigenous Women, we grew and developed the Diploma Course on Economic Autonomy and Environmental Justice, accredited by Carlos III University of Madrid and FILAC. By 2020, we had new knowledge documents to support advocacy: 9 community-based studies on Violence and Environmental Justice, conducted by indigenous women researchers; Global Study on Environmental Justice; Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls, within the context of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and the Report on Impact and Good Practices of Indigenous Women against COVID-19.

Leadership training and capacity building efforts continued through the Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women, with 460 women leaders trained in our School as of 2020. All from different nations and nationalities across Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Pacific and the Arctic. We have seen them representing their countries and communities in spaces, mechanisms, regional and international conferences. We have mobilized resources for the implementation of their advocacy plans within their communities. In this same line, the "Leadership Award" created in 2013, became sustainable and continues to reward the individual and collective work of local leaders, protectors and defenders of Mother Earth.

With a stronger leadership and network, we increased our presence and initiatives on the international scene. The dream of our founding sisters continued with fervor. FIMI has been this driving force that facilitates,

articulates and creates great conditions to prepare collectively political documents, reports, interventions and advocacy in international spaces. We also have contributed to the transformation of philanthropy. Always bearing out our claims, positions and knowledge to seek inequalities' transformation, the elimination of discrimination, racism, violence and the dispossession of our territories.



Another main foundation is the FIMI's collective governance. Between 2015 and 2016 we took on the mission of expanding our General Assembly, including indigenous sisters from the Arctic and the Pacific, in addition to strengthening the representation of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The current Directive Board is composed of 5 women leaders from Peru, Kenya, Philippines and Australia. In 2017, the new Executive Director of the FIMI Technical Secretary was nominated and appointed by the Directive Board, who took on the challenges involved by the institutionalization of FIMI. Teresa Zapeta comments that: "assuming the direction of FIMI at this stage has resulted in having the major responsibility of ensuring the continuity of the accomplishments achieved previously, but at the same time, strengthening the pillars that support the qualitative and quantitative expansion of the global indigenous women's mechanism".



We started by placing human resources at the center of the Technical Secretariat. Recognizing and strengthening its skills, generating responsible leadership, has been fundamental to make the cause of the Indigenous Women of the world our own. During these years we have grown in number, capacity and conviction. Currently the Administrative Office is located in Lima, Peru and the rest of the Technical Secretariat works virtually around the world.

Between 2016 and 2019, five areas were created to institutionalize FIMI's actions: Financial Management; Strategic Alliances and Programmatic Interconnection; Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; Resource Development and Mobilization; and Communication. These departments have been fundamental to sustain operations, generate a synergy that interconnects strategic programs and promote collaborative work.

We have developed a dynamic of collective effort, in which each one of us contributes, learns, learns again and takes on the challenges that involve changes and strategic growth. This is how we have been able to prepare manuals, procedure guides, control systems, administrative policies and other tools for management and accountability.

As part of this collective effort, we also identified the importance of institutionalizing alliances with external stakeholders and the donor community. A transition from personal trust to long-term institutional relationships. Consequently, agreements and pacts were created with Columbia University, MADRE, the Land Coalition Network in Rome, and the International Funders For Indigenous Peoples (IFIP). At the same

time, institutional relations with the donor community were strengthened through organizational communication mechanisms; the reinforcement of accountability systems; the promotion of dialogue and reciprocity.

The combination of each of the actions we carried out during this period led us to increase the credibility and trust of our allies, as well as of the donor community. We have strengthened our coordination with regional networks and other organizational expressions across the 7 socio-cultural regions. This allowed FIMI to stabilize its actions over time through its four strategic programs.

As a result, by 2020, FIMI benefited from a strong donor community committed to the rights of Indigenous Women including existing donors and new ones such as Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, Foundation for a Just Society, SWIFT Foundation, OAK Foundation, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands).

Thanks to this collective effort built over 20 years, FIMI has become a leading organization in the movement for individual and collective rights of Indigenous Women, with effective advocacy strategies and political participation at all levels, but especially at the international level. We support, in a sustainable way, the regional networks in strengthening them and in their actions at the national and community levels.

Two decades since we started our activities, although there is still much work to be done, we have come a long way, overcoming important challenges. Today FIMI has strategic allies, a stable and trusting relationship with the donor community, a more important budget to implement its programs and a solid, multidisciplinary, culturally diverse and intergenerational team of leaders that advances collectively.

In the Footprints of Indigenous Women



Throughout these twenty years, FIMI has influenced each of the Indigenous Women who have been part of the different stages of the project. This section intends to explain how this experience has had an impact on us and our peoples. We come from different places, share the same philosophies, values and issues, and can testify of the strong and close connection between the global and the community. Just as our Peoples traditionally transmit knowledge, we leave our legacy to the new generations so that, in the future, they can continue with the processes.

The stories included in this chapter are a sample of how Indigenous Women have made progress in exercising our individual and collective rights; in the recognition of our rights and the strengthening of our identity; in nurturing our spirituality; in the respect and preservation of our languages; and in the defense of our land and territory. These sister leaders have experienced different types of violence, and have faced them with wisdom and strength. They are an example of courage and resistance, they have said what has been hidden for centuries, they have been able to stand up and be the voice of the voiceless. They have been present where, a long

time ago, it seemed impossible for Indigenous Women to be and they have now the opportunity to learn what many like them have not been allowed to learn. They are aware that training, experiences and knowledge sharing are the key to transforming realities that are still facing 238.4 million Indigenous women, 6.2% of the world's female population⁴¹.

Shapla Swarna Ruram
(Bangladesh)

*"[...] going after money is not always the best
nor the fairest thing to do [...]"*

There are people who seem to be born with a mission that, at first, they don't know how to read, but they somehow feel called to it. This has been the case for Shapla. She was born in Netrikona District, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Now she is 28 years old, she is from the Garo Indigenous People in Bangladesh, although its members prefer to be identified as A.chik or Mande. It is an agricultural community surrounded by a plains landscape, with modest bamboo, straw and mud houses that are part of tidy and clean villages. Its people are known for their knowledge in land management, in a country marked with rivers and canals. They try to take care of nature, treating her like a daughter would treat her mother, and they love that space as their grandmothers and grandfathers did: "My ancestors lived in the trees, they built their houses there, and they grew many plants to survive and to make sure there would be food for the next generations." It is a wonderful place, but it's not perfect. And it is right there, in the hardship, that the seed of Shapla's work begins to germinate. "I always knew I wanted to work with nonprofits and do the kind of work where you can help humanity, the world and my native community, the Garo", she says.

41. Statistics and databases. <https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/lang--en/index.htm>

She has an extensive knowledge of the Bangladeshi socio-political reality and its Indigenous Peoples, and studied political science, with a specialization in climate change and food security. She started to build her leadership skills while she was a student and volunteer at the Bangladesh Center for Human Rights and Development. She later served as a human rights officer. Currently as a national officer, she works with vulnerable Indigenous Women, Girls and Youth. As a Garo woman, she understands their needs better than anyone else: "There are so many problems! Land grabbing, aggressions, discrimination, all things that affect them especially as women".

Shapla's organization is a partner of AYNi-LFS, and this has allowed her to receive various training from FIMI. She has participated in programs such as FIMI's Global Indigenous Women's Leadership School, in 2018; and the Diploma for Indigenous Women: Economic Autonomy and Environmental Justice, from FIMI's Research and Issues of Impact on the Lives of Indigenous Women program, in 2019. Thanks to each of these opportunities, she has learned about the reality of women in different countries, which allows her to formulate critical thinkings and to speak powerfully, transmitting clear messages: "People must take responsibility for the impact on the environment, [...], realizing that they are not the only people living on earth. There are many people, many problems and a bright future. We just have to be careful and protect lives". She considers FIMI as a friendly organization to which she can request assistance whenever she needs it. Because, although she loves her work, not everything is easy, and more than once things have not gone well: "Sometimes the training we give doesn't work. [...] working with communities is difficult, so you have to work very hard".

She dreams of a world where Indigenous Women are seen as equals to others. A world where developed countries do not use the "underdeveloped" as a way to make profit, recognize how much Indigenous Peoples bring to the environment, and contribute to the purity of the breathing air.

**National Indigenous Disabled Women
Association Nepal – NIDWAN**
(Nepal)

*"The problem with disability is that it is not
always accepted or recognized"*

When the earth moves, shaking her children, she looks like a cruel mother. She tests the fragility, but also brings out the survival instinct. This is how the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal - NIDWAN, located in the district of Lalitpur, was born, a result of the earthquakes that occurred in that country in 2011 and 2015.

After the 2015 earthquake, people were forced to leave their homes, which were destroyed, and to live outdoors for nine months. Among them were Indigenous Women living with disabilities, of various ages, who suffered abuses and violence, and nowhere to go to be supported. Thus, some of them founded NIDWAN, a common space where to reflect, share problems collectively and look for ways to transformation. In these mountains of rubble, it was difficult to find anyone interested in their needs, so, well organized, they decided to speak up at different levels. Today, NIDWAN works for 59 indigenous communities. Pratima, one of the Indigenous Women working there, says that they deal with issues related to "[...] intersectionality, women, gender, environment, disability, inclusion for all people, equity", with a single objective: "[...] we want to be respected, because we are living in a diverse country, with diverse languages, diverse people, and this must be reflected in all aspects of life, social, cultural, economic, political and historical". Despite the obstacles, they make a considerable effort on promoting empowerment, discussion and training programs, especially designed for Indigenous Youth living with disabilities.

If the earth opens up, there will always be ways to build bridges to the other side. In the search for these bridges, NIDWAN has become a partner of FIMI's Indigenous Women's Fund - AYNi. Over five years, the Young Women of NIDWAN have used the vibration of the earth to

generate change: "We have broken the traditional silence. We have been able to take on the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and persons living with disabilities" [...]", says Pratima. They have their own agenda, participate in events and meetings: "[...] we have shown that collaboration works. Because in these networks we also have the opportunity to engage with other organizations [...]".

The women of NIDWAN want to develop their full potential, to collaborate with different Indigenous Peoples, more partners for development to advance the agenda on equality and inclusion. They hope to see Indigenous Youth living with disabilities becoming leaders in order to address their own issues, to fight for their communities, to advocate for representation and transforming lives. "[...] it doesn't matter if we change the lives of five people or five thousand people. If we change the lives of five people, that's fine, that's very important to us, because that's our unique character and that's what we stand for," says Pratima.

Judy Muliap
(Papua New Guinea)

"My mother always told me to work very hard to survive in a world dominated by men"

One day, a mother told her daughter that she should be "strong like men," not knowing that with those words she was the origin of a women's rights advocate. The woman who pronounced those words was the mother of Judy, a girl from the Mari tribe in Papua New Guinea. Judy was born in a nest of leaders: "I come from a family of leaders," she says. My father was a leader and my mother was a leader, and they influenced me a lot. I grew up watching and learning from them. Just as wolf cubs learn to howl like their parents, she, now 47, learned from her parents to be a leader.

The name of her tribe is the one of her father because "the status of men in society is higher than women's. So, the children belong to the father's

tribe". The symbol of power for men is a stick with a snake. For women, a clay cookware symbolizing a bowl of food. Judy's leadership qualities grew when she started college at age 19: "I joined several women's groups and networks and took on executive roles in those groups. I served on the women's governing council [...]." Her mentor was May Lemont, from the Australian organization Soroptimist International, but also her children and, of course, her mother: "My mother [...] has been and always will be my best role model. She always told me that I had to work very hard to survive in a world dominated by men, [...] She told me that I needed to be strong like a man." Judy has worked at Soroptimist International⁴² for 15 years, and also volunteers to empower women who have experienced violence. She advocated for this issue at the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2010, and during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York in 2012. In 2017 she ran for the general elections of her country to give a voice to Indigenous Women, but didn't win.

Throughout the Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women (GIWLS) she found strength and confidence to become a better leader. There she developed a feasible advocacy project, which no one wanted to sponsor: the stakeholders she visited wanted to buy it from her, but refused to let her be part of it. "My country made 66 recommendations to the UN and they started to act. The government has approved the Family Act to protect women. [...] and these issues are being spoken about on radio and television." By speaking up for her nation, she has made recommendations to her government, leading to projects that are part of her advocacy plan, such as the education of Young People, especially women and girls on menstrual hygiene and domestic violence. Moreover, she has been managing several funds for education, health, maternal health. Her network of community partners and businesses has grown. "I would like to thank

42. Soroptimist International is a global volunteering service organization for women working for peace, especially to improve the lives of women and girls, within local communities across the world.

FIMI for giving me the opportunity to attend GIWLS. [...] There are not many organizations that do this. This program has continually helped me during my career and in my work with the community."

The Maori descendant aspires to run and win the 2022 general elections. This requires a lot of preparation, but the collective is organizing: "[...] we are thinking of creating a political party for indigenous women [...]. We need strategies, and work to see how we can support indigenous women who have political ambition."

Theresa John
(United States)

*"I have seen changes among the younger generation,
especially in inspiring them to create their groups
at the local and regional level".*

Bringing together academic knowledge and the teachings of Indigenous Peoples may seem complicated. For Theresa John it has been difficult, but not impossible. She is a Yup'ik Eskimo woman from southern Alaska, United States. She is 63 years old. She was raised by her tribe and grew up in a traditional home. Her parents taught her to value her community; her life is marked by interconnection with others, the environment and spirituality, which in her culture has a powerful place.

Theresa's mentor was her grandmother, who told her stories about her ancestors: "My grandmother taught us what it meant to be successful and work hard". Today, Theresa is an associate professor, but she dedicates her life not only to teaching but also to defending her language and history, restoring and preserving her culture, and promoting the recognition of her community's heritage. As a professor, in addition to doing the work expected of a teacher, she makes sure that her indigenous students respect the world they come from, learn about the issues that affect their living conditions and become aware of the risks involved for future generations if their traditions are abandoned.

She applied and attended the Global Indigenous Women's Leadership School. This allowed her to see that there are in the world leaders working day and night to defend their rights, protect their peoples and be the voice of voiceless. After completing the Global School Program, she organized training sessions with the Alaska Native group with whom, since then, she hosts annual meetings to address specific problems faced by their community, such as the increase in suicide cases, the disappearance of language and traditional practices, in order to find possible solutions. In the academic field, reconciling both worlds has enabled her to create culturally transcendental university courses, and has demonstrated how ancestral learnings of her culture can contribute to public policies, development and knowledge.

Theresa knows that leadership is only possible if it is interwoven with the new generations, since it is important to teach them local and ancestral knowledge so that they can become better leaders. With that belief, she hopes that the students she works with will attend the Global School and sow seeds that will germinate and ensure the continuity of the construction of a fairer world.

Ella-Karin Blind
(Sweden)

"I think of all the other indigenous women who rule the world every day and support their fight for indigenous women rights."

The Sámi people live in four countries, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Ella-Karin Blind is part of this community, considered one of the oldest nomadic cultures in the world, also known as the Reindeer People. She is 61 years old and comes from a reindeer herding family. Her parents spoke the North Saami language. She was born in Arjeplog, Norrbotten County, Sweden. In her culture, old women, highly respected, carry and preserve the knowledge of tradition and language.

Ella-Karin has worked at the Sámi Nisson Forum (SNF) for twenty years, "because I wanted to work for Saami Women's rights, especially for Reindeer Herding Women". She is part of Soroptmist International, where she works on gender and human rights issues. She has also built a network with other local and regional women's organizations. "I am an alternate member of Slow Food Sápmi, part of Slow Food International (...) For me it is very important to connect with Indigenous Women from all over the world. I have a large social network with many people." Most of what Ella-Karin has accomplished would not have been possible without that network: "My main role models are Maj Lis Skaltje, a Saami woman, my mother and my aunts, who are very strong Saami Women". One of these allies in the defense of Indigenous Women's human rights has been the Global School: "After the FIMI School I was invited to Brazil, to a very important conference on gender with more than 400 women from all over the world. I gave a presentation on Elsa Laula, one of the most famous Saami Women. Ella-Karin and SNF are co-organizing, with FIMI, the Second Global Indigenous Women's Conference for 2021, as a result of the time spent at the Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women, "I have improved my leadership since 2015. I am even more interested in the women's movement and leadership skills."

Ella-Karin wants to go back to the Permanent Forum in New York and find a solution to her question: "How can SNF survive in the future? We request funding every year, but we don't know how much we will obtain. We have no office, no employees, and we are spread all over Scandinavia and Russia." Her dream is for SNF to have an office and a leader, and in this way continue to work for Saami Women's rights.

Stephanie Big Crow
(United States)

"My grandmother used to sing me a song that talked about being a Lakota, that I should be strong because the generations descend from them and the power that they had".

It all started when Stephanie was in fourth grade. In history class, the teacher used the term "Indians" to refer to the indigenous population. She asked the teacher what she meant by "Indians". The teacher replied that it was a population that no longer existed. Hearing this came as quite a shock to her, because she and her family had always identified themselves as Indigenous People. So they didn't exist? That experience, which might seem small, led her to a huge fight for defending her identity.

Stephanie, now 41 years old, is a Lakota born in South Dakota, United States. From an early age, she was clear about where she came from and proudly assumed her identity. It bothered her that, because of her physical appearance, she was marginalized. Why did people look down on her? She loves her land and her people, the ones who have placed in her the hope for resistance. "I told myself that I could not allow this greed-filled country to dictate the path of my existence as a Lakota woman." Her grandmother, her father and her community have been important to her because they taught her values, social norms, practices for addressing collective issues, and spirituality.

Stephanie applied to FIMI's Global School program. There she learned a lot about women's rights and Indigenous Peoples' rights, and how international mechanisms can be used to defend the rights of indigenous communities. During this process, she acquired a wide range of knowledge about property rights and international human rights standards, which enabled her to attend law school.

She now advocates against exclusion, and encourages teachings about the Lakota People. In this context, she succeeded in having the

university recruit a tribal teacher and organized a summer school class entitled "Unlearning and Decolonizing". Students visit historical sites and meet various healers, connecting with the elders and their knowledge. By doing so, they reaffirm their identity, embrace their origins, and help them to respect the history and cosmovision of the Indigenous People.

Stephanie's work shows that, by recognizing the knowledge and values of the elders, it is possible to make changes to create an inclusive society that treats men and women with dignity, regardless of their origin.

Enedina Cervantes-Banks
(United States)

"We are still here, we are still singing, still hunting, still fishing, still teaching to our children just for them to be who they are, we are still here, and we will continue to do whatever we can to be who we are".

Her indigenous name is Pashko, of the Trueno Clan. Her legal name is Enedina Cervantes-Banks. She is 37 years old and was born in Oklahoma, United States. She comes from the Potawatomi Nation, of the Prairie Band, in Kansas, being forced to leave by the government several times; their first ancestral domain was in Michigan.

Pashko's mother was from a tribe in the United States, and her father was from an Indigenous community in Mexico. She recalls an indigenous activist and advocate saying that, in the United States, "you can be anything you want to be, but you can't be Indian." These words made her reflect on the injustices experienced by her ancestors - "When you don't know who you are, there is a feeling of loneliness, and no one should feel that way" - and she began to work for the preservation of her language: "I started to learn my language to preserve it. It's sad when you only know a few indigenous words [...]. Language is not just words, it has more meanings [...] and it brings everything together".

Since 2015, she has been involved in a campaign to promote breastfeeding, which is being abandoned in her community, and discusses ways to raise children in order to build strong mother-family relations.

She is one of the voices empowered by FIMI's Global School. There, Pashko learned that "If the community can't help you, turn to the state; if the state doesn't support you, go international." That experience has led her to accomplish things she would have never imagined, such as the nonprofit she is now starting, aimed at implementing programs to make cultural rights visible. In November 2019, her organization received official recognition from the State of Oklahoma: "I named it Tinokwe Foundation in honor of my mother. State recognition is a big deal. I never thought I could do something like this." She recognizes the positive impact of the Global School on potential leaders: "I wish everyone could go to the School because you learn so much, you can create alliances, network with so many people. It's really life-changing".

Enedina has hopes, and wants her family to maintain her culture's values and traditions: "My biggest dream is for people to identify themselves as indigenous and celebrate who they are [...]. I want to share my language and my culture with young people".

Belén Itahí Bautista Quiroz
(Mexico)

"Mushrooms are food, medicine: symbols of strength, life and revival."

Belén is a woman mushroom picker (or honguera in Spanish): she collects wild mushrooms. It is one of the most common activities of the indigenous communities during the rainy season: her people have been picking mushrooms for more than six hundred years. We could say that it is a laboral activity, but it is not easy work. To be a mushroom picker you have to be prepared, know everything about mushrooms, know when it

rains. She has acquired this knowledge throughout 19 years, her age, in San Esteban Atlatlauca, Tlaxiaco, in the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca, Mexico. She was born in April, the month of the lentin mushroom (or hongos de cuaresma, in Spanish): "When my mother gave me birth, my father gave her lentin mushrooms. That's where my story with mushrooms began".

The Mixteca Alta is a self-sufficient place: "I live in a very beautiful place, [...] surrounded by nature. We are a region divided into many ecosystems, [...] more than 70 percent of what is on the market is produced in my town". In the municipality where she lives there is a sawmill, and most of the men work there. During the rainy season, the women sell mushrooms. When she was 14, she realized that young people were not involved in any work other than the sawmill. So she started a micro-tourism project, which consists of inviting visitors to go on a tour in the mountains to collect mushrooms, which also allows them to get to know the community, its cuisine, and mushroom-based forest use. As a result of this project, in 2016 they decided to hold their first mushroom fair. In 2017 they formed the Ethnomycological Group of the Mixteca, promoting the sale of mushrooms at a fair price, which helps with women's economic autonomy.

Belén is a community human rights and environmental justice promoter, working with more than twelve communities. Her group has built partnerships with researchers and local authorities, has a network of cooks, and other municipalities have copied her project.

In 2019 she was part of the Intercultural Research for Indigenous Women program under the Diploma for Indigenous Women: Economic Autonomy and Environmental Justice, implemented by FIMI with the Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC) and the Carlos III University of Madrid. "Through this program I have acquired extraordinary tools which I can now apply in the business model developed for the Mixteca, such as the strategic evaluation of natural resources, finding the balance between economic development and the environment, understanding the contexts to be able to formulate proposals

to address specific problems, and peaceful negotiation". The program is a reminder that knowledge should be accessible to everyone, even if they do not have a professional education, as is the case of Belén. She has been successful in promoting the respect for mushrooms, making visible the importance of natural resources for Indigenous Peoples, honoring the work of women mushroom pickers (honguera) and working with groups to help them strengthen their productive activities. Her words speak of a dream: a balanced world.



**Coordination of Associations and Communities for the
Integral Development of the Ch'orti Region - COMUNDICH**
(Guatemala)

*"We will not stop the fight we have started, we will not stop, because the
battle to defend our rights must continue"*

The land where the grandparents and parents were born will always be sacred for their descendants: it is the first place their eyes will see, the place where they will grow up. For this reason, uprooting someone from their native lands is uprooting them from themselves. However, many Indigenous Peoples have been uprooted. When the communities of the municipality of Camotán, in the department of Chiquimulase, in Guatemala, were evicted from their native lands between 2002 and 2003, they joined

forces to protect their territories before the municipal governments and regain their legal title. This is how began the history of the Coordination of Associations and Communities for the Integral Development of the Ch'orti Region - COMUNDICH.

COMUNDICH encourages political participation, art, culture, promotes production initiatives to ensure food sovereignty in the communities through chicken farms, artisanal bakeries and youth leadership organizations. They have a council of elders, an alliance with the Achi, Q'eqchi, Kaqchikel, Xinkas peoples, and a land and natural resources administration council. They have created a Communal Lands Roundtable (Mesa de Tierras Comunale in Spanish) to defend their rights over their territories, which includes professionals from all backgrounds, including lawyers and engineers.

FIMI has provided COMUNDICH with legal advice. Elodia is a member of the organization and explains this process: "It has allowed us, as a team, to promote amparo actions⁴³ and lawsuits within the communities whenever fellows have been detained or assassinated". They have received funds for the project "Improving food and nutritional security in eight communities of the Mayan village of Ch'orti' located in the municipality of La Unión, Zacapa", by the Indigenous Women's Fund-AYNI of FIMI through the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) program. Abelina Vásquez is a partner of the AYNI Fund. She is one of the first women who has fought for the land, and has encouraged the participation of others as well as the preservation of ancestral knowledge: "Through this project I have the opportunity to have my own kitchen garden. This financial aid has strengthened us. COMUNDICH is always fighting for all of us".

Over these fifteen years of activity, COMUNDICH has achieved, by confronting the municipalities, land tenure for women and their communal

43. In most legal systems of the Spanish-speaking world, the writ of amparo (also called *recurso de amparo* or *juicio de amparo*) is a remedy for the protection of constitutional rights, found in certain jurisdictions. The amparo remedy or action is an effective and inexpensive instrument for the protection of individual rights.

participation: "In each community of the municipality, resistance commissions of women for natural resources have been created, meaning 21 commissions have been formed", says Elodia. Even without previous history in the management of economic resources, they were able to use their first grant very well, and this allowed them to obtain funds from other institutions, such as the Canadian Kenoli Foundation and GreenGrants, from the United States.

COMUNDICH still has a long way to go in its fight for the respect of indigenous communities and their right to lands. Its members, according to Elodia, consider that they must "persevere with the amparo actions brought to the Constitutional Court, led by women [...]", and ensure that, as women, "they respect us and give us the right to cultivate the land [...]". As women with authority, their challenge has been "how to be part of the production, to garden, to be part of women's groups where the healing grandmothers are and where we sow vegetables seeds and medicinal plants".

National Indigenous Women's Federation - NIWF (Nepal)

*"We need to raise our Indigenous Women's voices
locally, regionally and globally"*

Ants are small and extraordinarily strong. Like them, with loyalty and commitment to the common good, eight indigenous women formed the National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF) in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 1993. Today, they have branch offices at the provincial, the district and the community levels. They work with 60 indigenous communities, but through 43 organizations affiliated to NIWF.

Indigenous Women in Nepal live in poverty and their educational level is low: "[...] we speak our mother tongue, but in the education system we do not have access to learning Nepali". In addition, they do not have a voice and vote within the decision-making process: "The Constitution of Nepal does not recognize women in general, nor Indigenous Women [...]". NIWF works on various issues: "We work on issues related to women's recognition, Indigenous Peoples' right to lands, collective rights, access to natural resources and women's right to lands".

Working to achieve gender equality and equity, promoting the constitutional, political, legal, socio-cultural, economic and traditional rights of Nepalese Indigenous Women, NIWF is a partner of the Indigenous Women's Fund-AYNI. This alliance has enabled them to accomplish international achievements, participating in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). They have prepared a "shadow report" (a tool to monitor and control the compliance with international commitments on women's human rights, which various groups and organizations conduct and send to the UN in order to compare it with the official information received from nations or states) for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and hosted the Preparatory Meeting for the Second World Conference of Indigenous Women celebrated in 2021. In 2018 they made: "[...] recommendation on

41 articles approved by Indigenous Women at the UN". In 2019 one of its members attended the Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women.

They are a group of women empowering more women and their communities: "We work for the communities to address these issues, for the decision-making process, especially in protecting land areas". FIMI has helped them to improve their work and advocacy strategies, strengthening their members' skills, facilitating meetings and funding.

The NIWF team highlights the importance of collective work. They have done a lot for indigenous women without receiving any support from the State, since the Nepalese government does not support organized groups of women and limit access to economic resources: "[...] to continue with the promotion, many Indigenous Women's groups are formed, but how long will they last? They don't receive money, but they have to eat, they have to travel. They need money [...]". Despite this, the fight continues and the objective is huge, but not unreachable: "Our dream is to be recognized as Indigenous Women in the Constitution, Indigenous Women must be respected by the government".

Aeissatu Bouba
(Cameroon)

"Educated and empowered girls will be able to return to their communities and contribute to their development"

Everywhere in the world, girls dream, wish and have the desire to be free. However, there are places where that freedom has been taken away from them, by practices such as child marriage. Aeissatu is working to change that. She is from Cameroon, part of the Mbororo, a Pastoral Community. She is 43 years old and belongs to the organization "Forum des Femmes Autochtones du Cameroun", which works with Mbororo and pastoralist women, mainly on gender equality and empowerment, but also on education, peace and security, food, political participation

and environment. The Forum currently works in ten communities and three regions.

They educate girls about their rights and raise awareness in the communities about the importance of education as an important tool in their lives. As a strategy to avoid forced and early marriage, girls receive school materials and scholarships, with useful tools to cope with problems and develop leadership. When working with adult women, they address gender-based violence awareness to prevent physical and sexual abuse: "We educate them to sensitize them against gender-based violence. In addition, we assist women victims of gender-based violence in having access to support and counseling services. We communicate using community radio so that women understand what gender-based violence is and how they can protect themselves from being raped. [...] we train traditional religious leaders about the dangers of forced and early marriage and partner with them so that together we can contribute to eradicating it".

Her organization runs a project to raise awareness on women's political participation now being implemented in four communities in the Adamawa region. This initiative is being funded by FIMI's AYNi Fund Leading From the South program, composed of around five thousand indigenous women who now understand the importance of voting, aware that they have the right to register to elect their leaders and also to run for political office. The organization plans to support twenty Mbororo women to become councilors or members of the parliament for the next elections.

Aeisatu attended the FIMI Global School in 2015. Her organization is a partner of the Indigenous Women's Fund-AYNI Leading from the South (LDS) program. She participated at the "Linking and Learning" meetings, and preparatory meetings for the Second World Conference of Indigenous Women of 2021. "[...] I applied to the Global Leadership School and was selected. I took an online course on international human rights and women's rights and international advocacy skills. I had the opportunity to be invited to New York to meet with women from different countries [...]"

During her time at the Global School, Aisatu developed a project to raise awareness on the dangers of early and forced marriages targeting traditional and religious leaders. When she returned to her community, she implemented it successfully: "I had the opportunity to mobilize these traditional and religious leaders [...] We have created a good network, we feel that together we can take concrete actions to end early forced marriage within our community." The support they have received from FIMI has generated a wide range of benefits: individual and collective change, the articulation of regional networks of Indigenous Women, and the motivation to obtain other funding for their projects.



Aisatu is placing her hope in the Second World Conference: "We hope that the particular needs of Indigenous Women will appear in the document as well as: gender-based violence, the access to public services, political participation. She is putting all her energy into turning hope into reality.

Alice Lesepe
(Kenya)

"A world without women is not a world [...] without women men cannot do anything"

Fifty years ago, was born, in Kenya a girl who could have never been born. Some people say it is destiny, for others it was God's will. What is clear is who made Alice's life possible. She is the result of what people call a "miracle". Her indigenous name, Khoboso, means sadness relief: "[...] my mother went through several miscarriages before giving me birth, so I was one of the first babies to survive." Her warrior spirit fought to reach the earth. She was born in the native village of Rendille, in the Marsabit County of Logologo, a few hours from the Ethiopian border.

Alice's rebellion against machismo and patriarchy began in 2002, when she graduated from university. At that time she became aware that women in her community were not free and had very few opportunities for growth: "Girls can't go to school and are traded for dowries. Women have no voice". So she decided to do something about that. She now works on women's rights, climate change mitigations, actions against female genital mutilation, and leadership, agriculture and gardening programs, among others. She has been inspired by other women pioneers, like Lucy Molenkei, co-founder of the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network and coordinator of the Africa Region part of the World Biodiversity Forum. She has also been influenced by Wangari Magari, the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace.

Thanks to her activities, she has helped the women in her community to become more independent and to feel empowered, to own their businesses and to encourage their daughters to attend school.

FIMI is one of the international organizations that has made Alice's leadership stronger. She attended two of FIMI's training programs: one

related to Political Participation and Advocacy, and one of the Indigenous Women's Fund-AYNI. She considers these spaces valuable because "they understand that all our problems are similar worldwide. She values these spaces because "they understand that all our problems are similar at the global level. They help us exchange with women from different regions, [...] we learn good practices, we take them home and try to implement them". She has shared with the women in her community everything she has learned, explaining to them how, in other regions, they face problems similar to theirs.

But it is not an easy road when it comes to breaking rules that seem made of steel. Alice faces many challenges: her community is large and mobility is limited; women's illiteracy is a barrier to meetings and training; most of them do not know their rights and machismo limits new women's leadership emergence. In addition, there is a significant lack of economic resources and the situation deteriorates when there are natural disasters. But Alice has a goal: "my dream is to live in a society where women are free and can solve their problems on their own, making them possible on a global level".

Tania Edith Pariona Tarqui
(Peru)

"[...]we have to build this era so that it will be the era of indigenous peoples [...] an era where indigenous women are considered equal to men, where we have access to every opportunity and to all decision-making mechanisms"

Tania Pariona was born in the district of Cayara, Peru. She is Quechua, born in 1984, at a time when the Shining Path organization was fully active. She was 4 years old when she and her family witnessed the fight for survival: "My parents were forced to move from the district of Cayara, [...] They fled the violence, as did hundreds of other families living in rural areas". Now 36

years old, she is an activist for the rights of indigenous peoples, especially women and young people. She often wears her traditional dress with a black Cayarino hat, a symbol of indigenous resistance.

She began her work for individual and collective rights when she was still very young: "My first experience of international representation was at the age of 15, at the UN World Summit for Children in New York. There I was the voice of the children's feelings and propositions of my country, particularly of the children of my Andean reality".



She later studied social work and human development. In 2010, together with other women, she founded the Organization of Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru (ONAMIAP), and was the first youth secretary.

In 2013, she was part of and led the Network of Indigenous Youth Organizations of Peru (REOJIP). But she has also won an unexpected place for Indigenous Women, even more unexpected for women: the public sphere. In 2016 she was elected as a congresswoman for the "Frente Amplio por Justicia, Vida y Libertad" party, in office until 2019: "During the three years of parliamentary work we referred 50 bills to the different commissions and 13 laws [...]. We were the third party in passing the more laws".

She has three learning spaces: the academic one, the community and the different indigenous organizations (CHIRAPAQ, ECMIA and FIMI). She was part of the group of women formed in Political Participation by FIMI: "FIMI is a global network that has made possible the interconnection between these local, national and even regional experiences with other

regions of the world. Interacted with women from all over the world and cultures, has empowered us, has given us a transformative force for our territories. [...] During these 20 years of work, FIMI has provided us with spaces and opportunities for denunciation, propositions, political advocacy, capacity-building training for new generations [...] FIMI has achieved a real, effective and transformative empowerment of women".

Despite the violence she has experienced, Tania loves where she comes from and is proud to be a young Quechua girl, with parents and grandparents of Andean descent and culture.

All about us, with us



"History portrays us as savages. But, we are only defending our rights"

Tarcila Rivera Zea

By way of conclusion, after the history we shared of our collective, 20 years of FIMI, we reaffirm that we have achieved a lot, but we still have a long way to go.

There is no one better than our grandmothers to teach us the cycles. Deeply connected to Mother Earth, they patiently teach us that sowing is not only planting the seed in the ground. It is also learning how to observe the days and nights, the rhythm of the waters and winds; it is acknowledging the interconnection of all beings in a reciprocal and respectful relationship in order to share the fruits of life in community.

Thanks to their knowledge and the strength that unites us as a single fabric, we celebrate twenty-years with this book: FIMI 20 years of Collective Workforce. A path that we have shaped as the basis for development, with the confidence gained from the lessons learned and the accomplishments

for the years to come. The challenge is the size of our dream: a world free of violence, where all Indigenous girls and women can participate equally in the development of their communities and in the realization of their own dreams.

During these past 20 years, the collective force, to which the International Indigenous Women's Forum belongs, has drawn a clear strategic path for political advocacy in the area of Individual and Collective Rights. First, we meet and connect to agree on agendas and coordinate objectives. Second, we strengthen our skills and leadership. Third, we ensure our participation in international decision-making processes, to make sure of the integration of our views in all debates regarding our rights.

Step by step, FIMI has positioned itself as an international leader, promoting Indigenous Women's perspectives and priorities. Alliances with the United Nations system have increased and we have been constantly working on engaging with governments. FIMI now has extensive experience in lobbying, advocacy and capacity building strategies.

Over the years, FIMI has built trustful relationships with donors using transparency and accountability policies. Along with FIMI's expansion as an institution, more and more funding agencies are supporting intercultural gender co-investment through the Indigenous Women's Fund, AYNÍ.

The effective tracking, monitoring and evaluation system of accomplishments and pending tasks of the programs: Political Advocacy, Global Leadership School of Indigenous Women, Research and Issues of Impact on the Lives of Indigenous Women and the Indigenous Women's Fund, are a guarantee that the resources are invested in the indigenous communities.

We would like to highlight that by investing in an Indigenous Woman, it is also strengthening an entire community for seven generations. These mechanisms are not only related to the internal management of the

organization, but also include evaluations and monitoring conducted by the Indigenous Women leaders of the various partner networks. This enables them to be the main actors of their projects.

These mechanisms driven by Indigenous Women themselves have created change in the seven socio-cultural regions of the world. As we saw in the chapter "Stories of Change". However, it is important to continue with this effort because we are not all who we appear to be, but we don't all appear to be who we really are". But there is still a long way to go for Indigenous Peoples to fully exercise our rights as in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. So we continue to collectively spread our voice in the world, so that in the present and in the future, everything about us will be with us. FIMI : 20 ans d'efforts collectifs.



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