**Participation of Indigenous People at the UN**

UNHCR contributions to a stocktaking report led by OHCHR

UNHCR’s efforts to engage with indigenous groups are guided by its [Age, Gender and Diversity Policy](https://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/5aa13c0c7/policy-age-gender-diversity-accountability-2018.html) which calls for non-discrimination and participation for all irrespective of their age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ethnicity and other diversity characteristics. In practice, these commitments are implemented across the program cycle, and primarily facilitated by UNHCR's robust operational presence on the ground through its **Community-Based Protection approach** which engages communities in the identification of protection issues, their causes and solutions to address them building on capacities of the communities themselves**.** UNHCR conducts regular participatory assessments to identify and support the most marginalized groups and to ensure that the needs of these groups are seamlessly integrated and addressed in the programming carried out by UNHCR and its partners.

UNHCR operations report that forcibly displaced and stateless people belonging to ethnic, linguistic, religious or indigenous groups often face an additional set of risks related to their language, customs, community organization structures and culture because displacement may threaten their ability as a community and as individuals to preserve them. The main challenges that forcibly displaced and stateless people belonging to indigenous peoples face across operational settings and geographical locations are discrimination and marginalization, limited access to national identity registration and documentation services, exclusion and limited participation. Forcibly displaced indigenous peoples may be at heightened risk of becoming victims of trafficking, including labour and sexual exploitation, and this is particularly acute for minority and indigenous children and women, which in some contexts is linked to the effects of family separation due to displacement.

To address the heightened risk of **statelessness** among **indigenous peoples and minorities**, UNHCR works with national and local authorities to enhance registration and provide assistance and services. For example, around 500 Sama Bajao people, an indigenous ethnic group in the Philippines, received birth certificates in 2022. The protection of indigenous groups is also achieved by a direct **partnership approach** to empower their capacity to become agents of protection for their own communities. This is made possible through the [UNHCR Grant agreements with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons](https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-grant-agreements-organizations-led-displaced-and-stateless-persons-briefing-note), which facilitates the transfer of small grants to grassroots organisations, regardless of their registration status. In 2023, UNHCR grant agreements benefited refugee-led and host community organizations representing or supporting ethnic minorities, such as **Roma in Europe and indigenous communities in Brazil**.

Below are some examples of UNHCR activities to engage with and address the protection risk for minorities and indigenous peoples:

* Operations, including those in **Argentina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan**, and **Zimbabwe**, conduct specific participatory assessment exercises with minorities and indigenous persons to better understand their needs, capacities and envisioned solutions.
* To protect indigenous populations and help prevent and reduce statelessness in **Venezuela**, UNHCR builds the capacity of state institutions, NGOs and community structures, developing and dispensing related guidance, training community committees and outreach volunteers and providing information sessions on the right to identity and on birth registration procedures for indigenous populations. In 2022, UNHCR, the Civil Registry Office, the Office of the Ombudsperson and HIAS supported late birth registration and issuance of birth certificates for children of the indigenous Pemon people, members of the community of Uroy Uray in Bolivar State, who had reported obstacles to accessing birth registration in the past.
* In **Brazil**, indigenous community leaders participated in key forums like the Amazon Summit for COP 2030 and Brazil's significant "Acampamento Terra Livre" event, advancing demands with federal authorities. With UNHCR's support, government authorities recognized indigenous refugees, developing culturally tailored responses. The Ministry of Indigenous People established a multi-sectoral group for indigenous refugee policies, with regular contributions from UNHCR. UNHCR co-led the creation of the Warao Indigenous Leadership School32 to expand access to information and promote greater autonomy among the Warao indigenous communities living in Belém and Ananindeu. UNHCR also contributed to establishing the Youth Sustainability Committee, 12 out of 20 of whose young members represented indigenous peoples (Warao, Enhepa and Pemon).
* Also in **Brazil**, UNHCRsupports the local government through the management of shelters exclusively for indigenous peoples, that also serve as sociocultural centers for indigenous refugees and migrants from Venezuela. UNHCR and partners facilitate indigenous refugees’ access to documentation; access to services such as social assistance, education, and health; community-based protection initiatives; and livelihoods opportunities. UNHCR also supports the integration of indigenous peoples from Venezuela into communities inhabited by indigenous peoples born on Brazilian territory who share a collective identity.
* In **Guatemala**, UNHCR partnered with the Mayan association and networks of indigenous women and youth in Livingston, Izabal, to strengthen their leadership in areas with high violence rates, mitigate protection risks, and identify entrepreneurship opportunities.
* UNHCR conducted Focused Group Discussions in **Guyana** with indigenous women and girls about Gender Based Violence risks and mitigating strategies.
* In **Trinidad and Tobago**, the 2023 UNHCR Participatory Assessment included in-home interviews and focus group discussions with indigenous people, which helped shape the protection response and program cycle.

Key resources:

* [UNHCR’s policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD)](https://www.unhcr.org/media/policy-age-gender-and-diversity-accountability-2018)
* [Tip sheet on applying UNHCR’s AGD policy to minorities and indigenous peoples](https://www.unhcr.org/media/tip-sheet-applying-unhcr-age-gender-and-diversity-policy-minorities-indigenous-peoples)
* A promising practice from Brazil: [Using a holistic and intersectional empowerment strategy for effective community-based protection of indigenous peoples](https://www.unhcr.org/media/using-holistic-and-intersectional-empowerment-strategy-effective-community-based-protection)
* [UNHCR emergency handbook: Minorities and indigenous peoples](https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/persons-risk/minorities-and-indigenous-peoples?_gl=1%2A15ny5zf%2A_rup_ga%2AODY1NDI0NjcuMTcwNjE2OTE5Ng..%2A_rup_ga_EVDQTJ4LMY%2AMTcxNTYxNjg2My45Ny4xLjE3MTU2MTcxMzkuNTUuMC4w%2A_ga%2AMTAzMjk5NjA0Ni4xNjYzMjQyNjE5%2A_ga_X2YZPJ1XWR%2AMTcxNTYxNjg2My4zMDYuMS4xNzE1NjE3MTM5LjU1LjAuMA..#_ga=2.245288524.878896267.1715600996-1032996046.1663242619)

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