



OCTOBER 2021

## Lessons learned based on the analysis of the progress and achievements of the small grants funded through the Indigenous Navigator Initiative

The case of the pilot projects implemented through the collaboration agreement between IWGIA and the Center for Public Policy and Human Rights - Peru Equidad

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The Indigenous Navigator has received funding from the European Union (EU) through IWGIA. Project DCI-HUM/2017/383-425

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Report edited by the Center for Public Policy and Human Rights - Peru Equidad based on a Desk Review by María Eugenia Tamariz Tormen

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**First Edition:** October 2021



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>FEDIQUEP</b>	Federación Indígena Quechua del Pastaza (Quechua Indigenous Federation of Pastaza)
<b>GTANW</b>	Gobierno Territorial Autónomo de la Nación Wampis (Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampis Nation)
<b>IWGIA</b>	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>PUINAMUDT</b>	Pueblos Indígenas Unidos en Defensa de sus Territorios (Indigenous Peoples United in Defense of their Territories)



# FOREWORD

This document has been prepared on the basis of a desk review by Maria Eugenia Tamariz of Project DCI-HUM/2017/383-425. The review included the pilot project proposals that were approved by IWGIA, the reports of each of the projects, as well as interviews with key persons from institutions and Indigenous organizations in charge of the implementation of the projects, and with the Peru Equidad staff who participated in them. It has also paid attention to the final report compiled for IWGIA by Peru Equidad that keeps track of the results achieved and the difficulties encountered.

This analysis focuses on lessons learned from the implementation of local pilot projects in which Peru Equidad participated, with the aim to evaluate the possibility to replicate them, considering that it is necessary to promote initiatives that match not only local needs but also Indigenous Peoples' own visions of development. The review of other activities directly implemented by Peru Equidad as part of project DCI-HUM/2017/383-425 was not part of this assignment, which will be the subject of an external evaluation conducted by IWGIA this year.

# BACKGROUND

The Indigenous Navigator Initiative, which has received funding from the European Union, seeks to make Indigenous Peoples' issues visible through the establishment of a digital platform and to monitor the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention 169. The project also aimed to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its mandate to "leave no one behind".

Under the components Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 of the Indigenous Navigator Initiative, Peru Equidad, in agreement with Indigenous organizations and institutions, provided technical assistance for the implementation of community questionnaires among several Indigenous Peoples. It also developed a methodology to disseminate, among Indigenous Peoples involved, the 2030 Agenda<sup>1</sup> so as to promote a reflection the relationship between Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and collective rights.

Along with other activities aimed at improving dialogues related to public policies<sup>2</sup>, DCI-HUM/2017/383-425, known as Pillar 3 of the Indigenous Navigator Initiative, provided direct support to local projects, through small grants that were demand-driven, innovative and designed by Indigenous communities themselves. It was as a result of implementing the questionnaires and SDG related training that Peru Equidad discussed with these partners the possibility of identifying proposals to be financed through a fund of up to €60,000, administered by IWGIA. Projects had to specify which sustainable development goals they were expected

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- 1 IWGIA along with other institutions has pointed out that without clear safeguards on respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights, the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals also poses the risk of imposing culturally insensitive and even destructive development models on Indigenous Peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.
  - 2 Among the proposals submitted to the pilot project fund through Peru Equidad, three initiatives were selected with implementation timelines of 12 to 24 months. However, delays in the start of their implementation, in some cases, and the Covid-19 pandemic, made it necessary to extend their execution period. All projects were completed in April 2021.

to contribute to, as well as which Indigenous Peoples' rights the project would address. Ideally, each of these projects should also be carried out in collaboration with local governments, to contribute to good governance, and be developed in communication with social service providers to contribute to improving and facilitating access to quality services. Gender equality should also be considered in the projects in order to improve direct participation of Indigenous women in the planning and benefits.

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# STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT PROJECTS

This section addresses the execution of each of the three pilot projects.

## ***RECOVERY AND EXCHANGE OF TRADITIONAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE QUECHUA HEALERS OF PASTAZA FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE FAMILIES OF THE QUECHUA PEOPLE OF PASTAZA RIVER BASIN.***

The project has been implemented by the Quechua Indigenous Federation of Pastaza (FEDIQUEP). The Federation includes the Quechua communities of Pastaza River Basin in the districts of Andoas and Pastaza (Loreto Region). The project was implemented through a committee in the Sabaloyacu community, with a total budget of €20.034. The project seeks to provide a response to the following sustainable development goals: 5 *-Gender Equality-*, 3 *-Health and Well-being-* and 15 *-Life on Land -*, from their own understanding of their reality, collective rights and needs.

Quechua People have been immersed for decades in an environmental and ecological disaster as a result of oil extraction, so much so that their organizational efforts have been focused for many years on the introduction of higher social and environmental standards<sup>3</sup> and defending their rights.

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<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the combined action of the federations through PUINAMUDT has achieved important progress, including the creation of a trust fund for remediation, and standards that establish greater environmental requirements and regulate procedures.



The Indigenous Navigator Initiative has given the Quechua People the opportunity to address other relevant issues such as cultural continuity and the development of local knowledge resources.

The prioritization of the project was carried out in the context of the execution of the community survey in 2018. FEDIQUEP selected a community in the middle of the Pastaza River basin for its implementation, i.e., a community where the environmental and social impacts of oil activity are less severe. It is meant that the rest of Quechua communities will have access to the site where the project is being developed.

The site selected for the medicine center, called *Sacha Tarpukunawa Ampirina Wasi*, is located within Sabaloyacu Quechua community. A neighbouring forest has been demarcated as intangible together with Tundunaricocha, an oxbow lake, for the operation of the center, which will offer healing and learning spaces.

For the implementation of the project sponsored by FEDIQUEP, neighbouring communities where there was interest in promoting traditional medicine were invited to participate and a group of experts was formed to promote and participate in the activities. Meetings were held with the participation of said experts to plan actions, and a committee was formed in Loboyacu to implement activities and manage project resources. In addition, a group of young people was selected in Loboyacu to monitor the intangibility of the forest assigned to *Sacha Tarpukunawa Ampirina Wasi*.

The participation of women in the project is relevant to the extent that they are key in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and because their scope in terms of the application of knowledge and use of plant medicine differs from that of men.

The project, having been designed by the Quechua communities, responds to an existing demand and perceived need. It is also innovative in that it has been designed following cultural criteria. In parallel to the implementation of this project, the Quechua communities of Pastaza have formed an Autonomous Territorial Government of the Inka Nation as an expression of their desire for self-determination, which is supported by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The construction of the facilities and access trails were delayed by the emergence of Covid-19, which prevented mobilization in the basin for several months and the holding of meetings. It also slowed down progress in the introduction of medicinal plants into the forest and plots that the project intends to make available to the communities in the upper part of the basin whose territories are affected by the contamination.

Even with only one long house built, FEDIQUEP had expected to inaugurate *Sacha Tarpukunawa Ampirina Wasi* in April 2020, only two weeks after the pandemic was declared. An invitation video was recorded. To provide further sustainability to the medicinal center among those invited to attend were a company that promotes experiential tourism, representatives of the National University of the Peruvian Amazon –with which they had signed an agreement to carry out participatory research within the framework of the project–, and the National Center for Indigenous Health of the Peruvian Ministry of Health, which had previously visited and shown interest in the project and future collaboration.

Since the project has not been able to reach maturity, FEDIQUEP has prepared a document on its vision for the future of *Sacha Tarpukunawa Ampirina Wasi*, which is expected to make access to complementary funding possible.

The project reports and interviews with the beneficiaries show interesting achievements, but also significant challenges regarding local initiatives. These challenges and achievements are discussed in what follows.

These lessons learned should be considered for future small projects of this type. The following are some of the difficulties encountered:

- a. Difficulties in accessing banking facilities: There are no banking services in the area, which has forced those in charge of the project to make repeated trips to San Lorenzo to receive the periodic transfers made by Peru Equidad and to purchase supplies, a situation that generates additional costs.
- b. Challenges in the administrative management of resources: Due to a lack of administrative structure, Peru Equidad was an administrative partner in the autonomous management, so all expenses incurred had to be justified by payment vouchers. Since the participants in the activities for which they were to receive payments did not have a Single Taxpayer Registry (RUC) number, it was necessary to resort to the figure of Sworn Statements, which can be accepted by Peru Equidad up to a certain amount. However, in other contexts they might not be viable. The distances involved also made it difficult to submit the activity reports. Therefore, it is necessary to take these variables into account in order to include them in the implementation strategy for small projects.
- c. Local governments and service providers: The Indigenous Navigator project places considerable emphasis on the importance of projects being developed in collaboration with local government and improving and facilitating access to quality social services in collaboration with local service providers. This approach does not consider the roles of local governments at the district level, which are not involved in health-related issues. The provision of health services depends on the regional government and their respective health networks and micro-networks, but not on the district government, which is the case of Andoas and Pastaza, who also have a very limited budget even though a large part of tax funds originates in Andoas. FEDIQUEP has done continuous advocacy activities to improve the quality of health services and response; however, despite several formal agreements with the regional government of Loreto, the results are still very limited. Beyond this, there is the quality of municipal management and dialogue in Andoas and Pastaza which are hardly open to an intercultural approach, despite the fact that the majority of the local population is Indigenous.
- d. Project cycle: Pillar 3 pilot projects have had a short development period, by their very nature, and progress has been severely limited by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, instead of seeing this as a limitation, it is worth considering that the pilot projects can be thought of, and formulated as, seed projects, giving the opportunity to initiate projects that can find a complementary budget. In this case, the ultimate objective of the project is to strengthen family wellbeing and health by recovering, collecting and enhancing the practices and knowledge associated with traditional medicine. To this end, the project has laid an important foundation for this to happen.
- e. Monitoring costs: Project monitoring costs are high due to the location of the Quechua territory. Although the project included a monitoring budget, it was insufficient due to the need to make several trips to adjust the planning. Fortunately, Pillar 3 was able to complement these funds, which resulted in satisfactory support from FEDIQUEP and Peru Equidad. In community projects that are managed locally, co-management and monitoring can be crucial to their success, so it is important to allocate sufficient resources considering the logistical conditions of the implementation site.

## **RECOVERY AND EXCHANGE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF WAMPIS WOMEN IN AGROBIODIVERSITY**

This project has been implemented by the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampis Nation (GTANW) in the Morona River basin. The GTANW is an Indigenous institution established in 2015 and its jurisdiction covers the Santiago (Amazon Region) and Morona (Loreto Region) basins. The project seeks to provide a response to SDG 2 –*Zero Hunger*–, 5 –*Gender Equality*– and 15 –*Life on Land* – with a total budget of € 19,302.

The seed and knowledge exchange project among women was prioritized in the framework of the dialogue and discussions of the results of the community surveys applied in both basins. GTANW selected the Morona or Kankaim basin because of its greater isolation and because it is usually more difficult to implement projects there, thus introducing disadvantages in local communities.

The main relevance of the project is that it is a ground-breaking experience in giving women the responsibility of planning and implementing a new type of activities. The development of the project was entirely in the hands of women. A Wampis female leader was in charge of organizing local activities and of convening women in Wampis communities.

The project combined seeds exchange, which is a primarily female domain, with seed cultivation and conservation knowledge, as well as nutritional knowledge and exchange based on traditional foods. When discussing communal surveys Wampis participants had linked increasing nutritional deficiency in their communities to increasing loss of seed stock and crop varieties in young women's home gardens. They also took into account the risks posed by the climate crisis of a greater loss of food security.

The project's strategy was to select pairs of women composed of younger and older ones in four communities. These pairs of women would strive to increase their seed and planting diversity in gardens and to share their achievements with the other women. In order to increase the seed stock, a trip was organized for the women to Sucua in Shuar territory in Ecuador. In successive project phases, the women were invited to visit the women's gardens where they could share their knowledge and experiences.

It is worthwhile noting that the project planning took into account an adequate level of intensity of the activities, spacing them sufficiently from each other, while considering the seasonal rhythms that affect the development of the gardens and plant growth.

However, as in the case of the Quechua pilot project, Covid-19 had a significant impact on this project's development because it completely interrupted the project activities throughout 2020. Also, lockdowns and health crisis resulted in a somewhat abrupt project closure in April 2021.

Nevertheless, due to the interest aroused by the project, a group of women from Wampis communities in the Santiago or Kanus river basin requested from GTANW to manage resources for an equivalent experience in their communities. The replication of the project in the Santiago River basin, which began in 2020, was possible in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic due to the shorter distance between the communities and greater logistical advantages. The original experience had been broadcasted by the Wampis FM radio station called Tuntui, which is based in the Santiago or Kanus River basin.

The project meets the criteria of having been planned by the local population in response to a demand and objective identified by them. It is innovative in the sense that it has been managed directly by Indigenous women themselves; it has also proven to be replicable. The restructuring of the activity in light

of Covid-19 by the women in the Santiago River basin demonstrates that it has been clearly appropriated by the local population.

The original design included in its last phase an awareness raising component with the district mayor to propose the implementation of activities in support of autonomous food security. Unfortunately, Covid-19 prevented these activities from proceeding normally.

A systematization document is currently being developed and will be published to disseminate the experience in all Wampis communities and encourage the continuity of activities to promote the exchange of seeds and knowledge between women and communities in favour of biodiversity and food security.

The project reports and interviews with the beneficiaries reveal several significant achievements but also some challenges that should be considered for future small projects of this type, some of which we include below:

- a. Preparation time: pilot projects have a limited duration. Although due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project duration was extended, the need to define an initial project start-up period was not sufficiently considered, especially in view of the novelty of the strategy, the methodology and the corresponding theme. In the case of the project, the start-up was complicated and had delays. In innovative projects at the local level, and even more so in the case of projects that are to be conducted by women's groups with less experience in project management, it is necessary to foresee an initial period for local planning and staff training. It is also necessary to pay attention to family rhythms and their seasonal calendar, during the planning and development of projects with women.
- b. Male chauvinist context or lack of openness to gender equity: Despite the support given to the project by the Territorial Government of the Wampis Nation, as a project with active participation of women, it faced challenges such as the case of women whose husbands did not want to allow them to travel, and local leaders who did not give strong support to the project. This reveals that the development of projects with women requires other actions to be carried out in their surroundings that uphold the importance of women's leadership activities and of leaders who support women's empowerment.
- c. Economic management of the project: It should be noted that in the case of this project, it did not present any management complications because GTANW has a solid administrative structure. However, as in the case of the Quechua project, the enormous distances to banking institutions called for administrative arrangements that were not initially foreseen because, while the project was developed in the middle and upper Morona River, the banking facilities are located in San Lorenzo, almost three days away by river.

## **WAMPIS INTERCULTURAL SHARIAN SCHOOL OF LEADERS**

The Sharian School of Leaders responds to a strategy of the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampis Nation to train community and inter-community leaders who have the capacity to manage internal affairs and carry out constructive processes in terms of dialogue with the State. The project has aimed to contribute to SDG 1 *-No Poverty-*, 5 *-Gender equality-*, 10 *-Reduced inequalities-*; and 17 *-Partnerships for the goals-*. The project had an allocation of € 41.664.

Unlike the agrobiodiversity and women's project, which GTANW initially focused on the Morona River basin, this project was meant to involve both basins from the start. To be successful the School of Leaders

project had to secure that its young students be involved consistently for more than a year. It also had to incorporate young women.

Unlike other “School of Leaders” experiences, which focus on training participants only in legal regulations and collective rights, the proposal of the Sharian School involves a dialogue with Wampis history and analysis of changes that have occurred in this society and in its relationship with the State. The proposal aims to create capacities to respond to different levels of situations and create resources for the communities, in addition to bringing them closer to the autonomous management of the Wampis territory.

The pilot project was successful in maintaining participation of the 32 young men and women, 6 of whom were women. Although Covid-19 interfered with the project activities for several months, the project managed to ensure that its continuity and goals were not affected and that the group of young people did not disintegrate. The extension of the project’s execution time has allowed all the planned modules to be developed. A municipal observatory to monitor local government activities was created in Rio Santiago District as a result of the Sharian course. However, no possibilities existed of involving the local government’s authorities in jointly monitoring the 2030 Agenda.

Because the communities recognize the importance of the project, the GTANW plans to carry out future leadership training cycles, if it finds donor funding to do so. It also plans to be the nucleus of a training institution covering technical subjects, possibly in partnership with an accredited institute. The GTANW already has experience in inserting intercultural content into higher education programs, together with the national university based in Bagua.

The project has demonstrated its replicability because, through an agreement between Peru Equidad and the Federation of the Achuar Nationality of Peru, the modules have begun to be adapted to local cultural contexts, with a positive reception.

The interviews and reports reveal important achievements, and their analysis highlights the importance of leadership training programs oriented to finding answers to problems identified at the local level, as opposed to proposals built almost exclusively from outside and with an external diagnosis of needs.

# LESSONS LEARNED

1. Comments made by local populations and Indigenous institutions in the context of analysing the 2030 Agenda and community surveys reveal the importance of building bridges between the Agenda and the way in which Indigenous Peoples perceive it from a rights-based and cultural tradition approach. In fact, for example, several documents produced in the framework of the Indigenous Navigator project targeting SDG 1 –*No Poverty*– distance themselves from the perspective that categorises Indigenous Peoples as inherently poor. With regard to other SDGs to which the projects have sought to contribute to, it is clear that mediation is required between the general assertions of the United Nations on this matter and the paths that Indigenous Peoples propose to achieve the 2030 Agenda with a rights-based approach<sup>3</sup>. This issue is extremely important when formulating public policies that seek to achieve the SDGs in line with the local vision of well-being and, to a large extent, with the importance of lands and territories for Indigenous Peoples.
2. Pilot projects, because of their innovative character, require planning to consider an initial readiness period to fully adjust to local capabilities and the existing logistics and environment. Flexibility is also required to adjust project planning based on local progress monitoring.
3. Furthermore, while the resources available for pilot projects are usually small, the interest in and possibility of finding complementary funding should be taken into account from the initial planning phase to throughout the monitoring process. This approach ensures that innovative approaches and local impact are not limited by small scale project formats. In this sense, small projects can be conceived as bricks with which to build more complex strategies for the achievement of well-being.
4. It is very important to advance in developing projects that involve women, from their conception and in their management, aspects that are concomitant with the search for gender equity in their own cultural

terms. However, since these projects are developed in an environment with male chauvinistic biases, it is necessary to pay attention to the complementary measures required to achieve for full participation.

5. Projects with women must respect women's work rhythms and their seasonal calendar within the framework of their family obligations. This may imply that the results expected in a given time must be relativized and adjusted to their availability without impacting the timeline of the project.
6. Even small pilot projects are subject to legal regulations, and they depend on logistical and administrative conditions, as they usually require a fiscal sponsor that cannot escape this requirement. Hence, local project implementers need to have adequate and timely information on the legal-administrative environment so as not to create problems that are difficult to manage. This should be part of the design of small projects.
7. Some cooperation programs to which Indigenous Peoples and communities can apply for their small projects reduce costs by not investing in support. However, replicability and learning can rarely be achieved from these experiences. It is therefore necessary to internalize, in a responsible manner, within the institutional frameworks, the costs of support and monitoring of small pilot projects, precisely because of their pilot nature, their innovative condition and the situations that require adjusting schedules, methodologies and even goals.
8. The pilot projects in the Indigenous Navigator Pillar 3 were expected to carry out activities that result in collaboration with local governments. This approach is aimed at ensuring Indigenous Peoples' participation in local governance, decentralization, and ensuring the suitability of service offerings, among others. However, the idea that collaboration with local governments is a criterion for success should be revised, as it is beyond the will of local actors.
9. It would be worth considering the extent to which it is the combination of diverse efforts that contributes to the success of a small project.

The review of the pilot experiences carried out for this exercise, allows us to see significant advantages in projects developed based on local demand and from the Indigenous Peoples' own identification of their needs. This kind of experiences contrast significantly with those implemented by external NGOs or state agencies in the degree of ownership of the projects and the experience gained. However, the review also shows that giving control of the projects to the local communities is not a guarantee of success, since environmental and logistical problems must be considered and appropriate responses to these challenges must be ensured.

