



## POLICY BRIEF



Henry Saragih, former General Coordinator of La Via Campesina in front of the FAO in Rome.  
Source: La Via Campesina

# Promoting the participation of affected communities in global climate agreements

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Transnational peasant and Indigenous Peoples' movements strive to represent and advocate for communities most affected by climate change. Yet they face numerous challenges to participate meaningfully in global climate agreements.

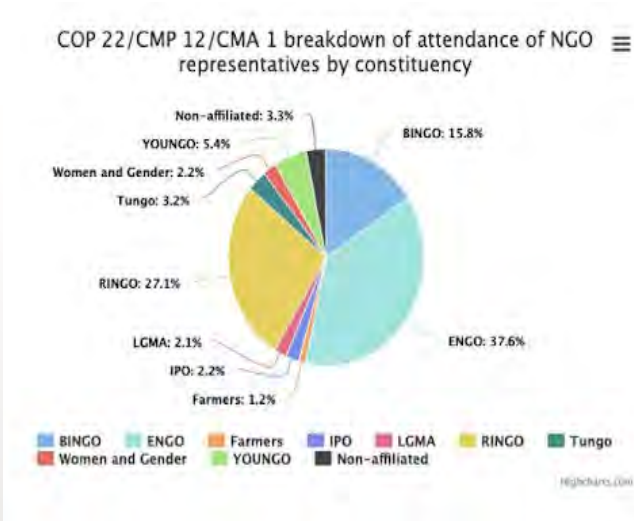
### WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Despite improvements over the last two decades, global governance arenas have failed to develop adequate mechanisms to facilitate the inclusive and meaningful participation of those most affected by climate change, such as local communities and Indigenous Peoples. In most UN spaces, the trend is towards multi-stakeholderism which means that all actors concerned are invited to participate, including corporations or philanthropic organizations, without addressing power imbalances among these actors (Claeys & Duncan 2021). Indigenous Peoples and farmers represent only a marginal portion of

### KEY RESULTS

- Indigenous Peoples' organisations have used their political engagement within the UNFCCC to gain respect for their territorial and human rights and the means to exercise those rights.
- Transnational peasant movements such as La Via Campesina have actively chosen not to participate inside UNFCCC meetings, and to denounce the market-based orientation of climate solutions from the outside.
- Transnational peasant movements such as La Via Campesina have been very vocal on the issue of climate change, advancing peasant agroecology and relocalised food systems as key solutions to address the climate crisis.

the non-party stakeholders participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), compared to other groups (e.g. business and industry NGOs and environmental NGOs).



Source: UNFCCC, 2021. Youth (YOUNGO), trade unions (TUNGO), business/industry NGOs (BINGO), environmental NGOs (ENGO), research and independent organizations (RINGO).

Indigenous Peoples have sought to influence various climate policies, working for their meaningful inclusion in the UNFCCC, to increase their decision-making power and regain control over their ancestral territories. At COP24 in 2018, their advocacy efforts resulted in the creation of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP). The LCIPP defines itself as “an open and inclusive space that brings together people and their knowledge systems to build a climate-resilient world for all” (LCIPP 2021). It supports exchanges of



First Local Community and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) multistakeholder forum, 2018. Source: COP 24

experiences around traditional and local knowledge systems, builds capacity to engage in the UNFCCC process, and supports the climate actions undertaken by local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

The LCIPP formally recognizes the importance of traditional and local knowledge and of grassroots solutions to the climate crisis, which is a key step forward. Yet, the LCIPP struggles to ensure the balanced and meaningful representation of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and state parties. The lack of a clear and inclusive definition of the term “local communities” is an important gap. It may lead to the exclusion of local communities that are rejecting state policies, contesting development projects on the ground, or that are not recognized by the state.

Researchers Deborah Delgado Pugley (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú) and Priscilla Claeys (Coventry University) compared the involvement of La Via Campesina and the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) in global climate discussions between 2007 and 2015.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Indigenous Peoples’ organisations have used their political engagement within the UNFCCC to gain respect for their territorial and human rights.**

This insider strategy has proved effective as the IIPFCC succeeded in influencing schemes designed to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) including specific safeguards. Indigenous Peoples have increased their participation in UNFCCC processes and are recognized as the strongest alliance of stakeholders within the new LCIPP. Yet, these achievements at the global level are not always translated at the national level, where the implementation of territorial and human rights faces important limitations.

**Transnational peasant movements such as La Via Campesina have actively chosen not to participate inside the UNFCCC, to denounce the market-based orientation of climate solutions.**

Small-scale farmers are not part of the UNFCCC farmers' constituency, which is biased towards organisations representing mid-to-large scale farmers. La Via Campesina, a transnational peasant movement representing over 200 million small-scale food producers, has adopted the strategy of trying to shift the terms of the debate from the outside by denouncing the climate impacts of industrial agriculture. With increased attention given to agriculture in climate change adaptation and mitigation policies, the rights and interests of small-scale and peasant farmers must be represented in the UNFCCC. La Via Campesina has advocated that peasants should be recognized as part of local communities in the LCIPP, to address the exclusion of peasant communities from decision-making at all levels, and support their climate actions (LCIPP 2019).

**La Via Campesina has been very vocal on the issue of climate change, proposing alternative solutions grounded in food sovereignty and peasant agroecology.**

What triggered La Via Campesina's involvement in climate debates was the threat raised by "false solutions" being promoted by the UNFCCC to respond to climate change, such as GMOs, carbon trading and agrofuels (La Via Campesina 2007). Peasant movements have used climate discussions to advance their alternative development paradigm grounded in relocalized food systems, the rights of peasants and agroecology. Local food chains and low-input farming practices can help address climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by between one quarter and half within a few decades (GRAIN 2016). Peasant women, especially Indigenous women and women of colour, are on the frontlines of struggles to transform food systems (La Via Campesina 2016).

## **POLICY INSIGHTS**

**Human rights need to be at the heart of climate actions, solutions, and global governance.**

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is recognized within the

UNFCCC process. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) recognizes peasants' rights to "contribute to the design and implementation of (...) adaptation and mitigation policies, including through the use of practices and traditional knowledge" (UNDROP 2018).

**As members of local communities, the voices of Indigenous Peoples and peasants must be heard in global climate debates.**

Indigenous Peoples and peasants possess knowledge and practices that are crucial to designing and implementing effective and ambitious climate actions. They are also among the most affected by climate change. The LCIPP represents a key space to represent and advance their voices. In order for the LCIPP to play its role, the term "local communities" should be defined in an inclusive way, building on existing definitions in international law, such as in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD 2021) or the UNDROP. Recognizing that local communities are diverse, the characteristics for defining them should be broad to minimize the risk of exclusion.

**Self-identification and self-organization are key to shaping pathways to strengthen the representation of local communities in the LCIPP**

Enhancing the participation of local communities within global climate agreements is challenging, considering the absence of identified constituencies at the local or national level. Yet, social movements bringing together peasants and other local communities at all levels do exist. Their inclusion in the LCIPP should respect both their self-identification as local communities and their right to organize autonomously.

**Transnational peasant and agrarian movements, including fisherfolk and pastoralist organizations, must be recognized as local communities.**

Their active and meaningful involvement in the LCIPP should be facilitated, including within the LCIPP Facilitative Working Group. It is important that the composition of the Facilitative Working Group be expanded to foster the inclusive representation of peasants and other local communities, without undermining the participation of Indigenous Peoples' organizations.

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