

## CONCEPT NOTE

### Implementing the Global Action Plan for the 2022-2032 International Decade of Indigenous Languages

<b>Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies):</b>	Global with regional and national activities
<b>Duration (in months):</b>	24 months
<b>Name, Unit and contact details of Project Officer(s) :</b>	CI/UAI - Chief of Section Jaco Du Toit, <a href="mailto:j.dutoit@unesco.org">j.dutoit@unesco.org</a>
<b>Partner(s) institutions:</b>	UNDESA, OHCHR, IFAD
<b>Tentative budget</b>	3 360 376 USD

### Rationale and overall purpose

There are more than **seven thousand languages** on the planet, a vast majority of which are spoken and signed by Indigenous peoples. Over recent years, the linguistic rights of Indigenous peoples have gradually become a matter of international public interest, as languages around the world continue to disappear at alarming rates. If the global community fails to act, **many of these languages could fall out of use by the end of the century**, also causing potential disappearance of indigenous knowledge and cultures that are essential for addressing global issues such as those of environmental sustainability, climate change action, or biodiversity conservation.

While various international fora and cooperation mechanisms have called for the application of a holistic approach in language preservation, revitalization and promotion, with due attention to the full spectrum of human rights, the theme of Indigenous languages has often been approached as an auxiliary aspect within several wider fields such as self-determination, participation, land rights, climate change, socio-cultural development, or other issues.



Against this backdrop, the UN General Assembly proclaimed in 2019 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) with the resolution A/RES/74/135<sup>1</sup>, inviting all stakeholders to draw attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to ensure that **Indigenous languages are preserved, revitalized, promoted**, and used across all socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and political domains and are drivers for building peace, justice, development, and reconciliation in our societies.

The International Decade<sup>2</sup> **calls on all stakeholders** to work to ensure:

- **Greater awareness** of the importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism
- **Legal recognition** of Indigenous languages
- **Integration, mainstreaming** and usage of indigenous languages

<sup>1</sup> See [N1942626.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> More information can be found on the UNESCO dedicated webpage for the Decade: <https://en.unesco.org/idil2022-2032>

- **Continued support** through the allocation of financial, human, and institutional resources, and infrastructures

In order to achieve the goals of the International Decade and establish a coherent operative framework, a **Global Action Plan**<sup>3</sup> was drafted and presented to the UNESCO General Conference in 2021. The Global Action Plan calls for a **coherent approach** and for **collaborative action** by all stakeholders to achieve maximal positive impact and social change with respect to Indigenous languages and those who speak and sign them. It establishes the terms for joint action, outlines the strategic approach, defines major steps, provides guidance on implementation, monitoring and governance structures and suggests measures to be taken by UN-system entities, governments, Indigenous Peoples' institutions and organizations, including communities at the grassroots level, broader civil society, academia and the private sector, to achieve the major objectives of the International Decade. The Global Action Plan also contributes to fulfilling international normative instruments, development frameworks and recommendations contained in United Nations documents, including those of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO resolutions and other relevant documents.



This concept note responds directly to Activity 10.1 of the Global Action Plan which calls for the “**mobilization of financial, institutional and human resources for the implementation of the Global Action Plan of the International Decade through the establishment of a multi-donor trust fund mechanism and donations of expertise, products and resources...**” The funding mobilized is to **support the initial stage of the Global Action Plan implementation in 2023-2024**. In order to truly rally a wide range of stakeholders to participate in the implementation of the Global Action Plan, it is indispensable to start with visible and focused flagship projects in order to demonstrate the impacts and potentials for upscaling for years ahead.

*“Leaving no one behind, no one outside” by 2032*

### Why UNESCO?

When the International Decade of Indigenous Languages was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, **UNESCO was designated as the lead agency** in collaboration with UNDESA, OHCHR, and other relevant agencies. A Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages was established to guide the implementation of the International Decade and UNESCO serves as the secretariat to this governance mechanism. The International Decade was launched on 13 December 2022 at UNESCO's Headquarters with the participation of 125 countries in the celebration.

UNESCO is indeed well positioned to act as a coordinating mechanism for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. Both its thematic expertise in the relevant areas of educational, cultural and linguistic policy and Indigenous rights and its concrete experience in managing other International Decades offer a stable foundation for the International Decade to grow and have the widest reach possible. Drawing on UNESCO's various standard-setting instruments such as conventions and

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379853/PDF/379853eng.pdf.multi>

recommendations<sup>4</sup> and operational and research projects and programmes<sup>5</sup>, UNESCO's engagement in the realm of policymaking among Member States has yielded countless benefits and raised awareness globally on a number of key issues including indigenous languages, knowledge and culture. In this respect, UNESCO's commitment to the case of Indigenous languages as facilitators for the promotion of Indigenous rights in access to justice, healthcare, education, freedom of expression, and cultural identity, has a strong platform promising solid future engagement. Similarly, UNESCO has experience formulating structured and coherent plans on which its partners can base concrete action with foresight. The Global Action Plan for the International Decade provides guidance and resources for all stakeholders.



While the overall coordination of the International Decade is carried out by the **Communication and Information Sector** of UNESCO, it benefits from **intersectoral inputs** from the **Culture, Education, and Science Sectors** on issues such as the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, empowering indigenous people to be creative entrepreneurs to develop their cultural goods and services and promoting them in various media, access to quality education, and use of Indigenous knowledges for the benefit of biodiversity respectively. Indeed, one of the five **Intersectoral Programmes of UNESCO** to be implemented in 2022-2025 particularly focuses on supporting countries to **protect, safeguard and promote indigenous knowledge, cultures and languages through inclusive policies and targeted action**. This intersectoral approach demonstrates UNESCO's commitment to the longevity of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages by integrating it into its broad range of ongoing initiatives in a multilateral and collaborative manner.

In planning and managing the International Decade, UNESCO draws from its experience with a wealth of existing partnerships to which it has contributed both directly and indirectly. These include, among others: the UN Indigenous Peoples' Partnership (2010-2016), the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019.

## Links with 2030 Agenda



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a historic appeal for concerted global action to end poverty, to protect the planet and to ensure that by 2030 all people everywhere enjoy peace and prosperity. The 2030 Agenda also invites all stakeholders at all levels - including local - to make certain that policies, budget priorities, government institutions, regulatory frameworks, together with cities and local authorities, contribute determinedly to the eradication of inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination, as well as ensuring that public access to multilingual information and fundamental freedoms are integral part of the above-mentioned Agenda.

Since **language**, as a **cross-cutting issue**, embraces and transcends all spheres of human life, it is crucial to guarantee a **free flow of information and knowledge**, conveyed in Indigenous languages. It is equally important to enhance the functional usage of Indigenous languages across disciplines and domains, including international forums, thereby providing opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to express themselves in the language of their choice. **Access to public services and media contents** (both information and artistic/cultural contents) in Indigenous languages is a prerequisite for creating prosperous, just, and inclusive societies. The importance of languages' potential economic value for

<sup>4</sup> 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage; 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

<sup>5</sup> Local and indigenous knowledge systems programme (LINKS), [World Atlas on Languages](#).

development must also be recognized, and urgent actions must be taken to preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages which are essential to comprehensive humanitarian responses in the face of global challenges.

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages is a unique platform for alerting the world community and highlighting the important contributions made by Indigenous Peoples through their languages towards peace building, sustainable development, human rights, and for emphatically reinforcing the call for concrete measures against discrimination and exclusion on linguistic grounds. The Global Action Plan establishes **direct (SDG 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 13, 16 and 17) and indirect linkages (SDG 1, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14 and 15)** which generate effective interactions among a wide range of stakeholders, as part of its contribution to the attainment of the SDGs and associated targets, alongside other strategic international, regional and national frameworks.

## Summary of outcomes, outputs and activities of the Global Action Plan

The Global Action Plan proposes the following **four interlinked outcomes**:

**Outcome 1: Indigenous Peoples are being empowered** to learn, teach, and transmit their languages to the present and future generations in a variety of forms and through any medium or channel, offering an improved quality of life, strengthened participation, leadership and decision-making, increased dignity and respect, and secure self-confident identity, as well as through enhanced abilities/competencies contributing to language fluency, vitality, and a higher number of users resulting from the widened scope of the domains in which these languages are used.

**Outcome 2: The usage, preservation, revitalization, and promotion of Indigenous languages are by 2030 established as a global priority**, and the long-term commitment of all stakeholders is guaranteed towards building peaceful, just, sustainable, inclusive, and resilient societies.

**Outcome 3: Indigenous languages are recognized** by Member States within their legal systems and legislation, which in turn are supported with comprehensive language-related laws and policy frameworks and are backed by allocated financial, institutional, and human resources, enabling Indigenous languages to be used fully and functionally in all socio-cultural, economic, environmental, legal, and political domains.

**Outcome 4:** As a result of actions being taken by all stakeholders during the International Decade, **an enabling environment is being developed and becoming fully operational to enhance the functional usage of Indigenous languages in socio-cultural, economic, environmental, legal and political domains** through the implementation of supportive legal and policy frameworks, strengthening relevant institutions including their **coordination and financing mechanisms**, the definition of their roles and responsibilities, capacity building among all stakeholders, encouraging social and intercultural dialogue, as well as the participation of all stakeholders, especially Indigenous institutions and organizations.

The Global Action Plan includes **ten interlinked outputs** that underpin the outcomes:

- **Output 1:** Inclusive, equitable, intercultural, **quality education and lifelong learning environments** and opportunities in Indigenous languages provided in formal, non-formal and informal educational settings.
- **Output 2:** Enhanced capacities among Indigenous Peoples for applying their languages and knowledge towards the **eradication of hunger and maintaining the integrity of Indigenous food systems**
- **Output 3:** Favourable conditions established for **digital empowerment, freedom of expression, media development, access to information and language technology**, alongside artistic creation in Indigenous languages
- **Output 4:** Appropriate Indigenous language frameworks designed to offer **better health provision**, recognizing traditional systems of medicine, as well as promoting social cohesion and delivering humanitarian responses, especially during health crises, times of conflicts and natural disasters

- **Output 5: Access to justice and availability of public services** guaranteed to Indigenous language speakers and signers
- **Output 6:** Indigenous languages are sustained, as a vehicle of **living heritage and biodiversity** and participation in - and access to - all forms of culture are enhanced for Indigenous Peoples
- **Output 7:** An enabling environment is created for Indigenous languages, thereby contributing to **biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation**, ecosystems management, land restoration, improving the marine and coastal environment, reducing natural hazards, preventing pollution, and managing water resources
- **Output 8: Economic growth** is strengthened through the enhancement of decent job opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and language users
- **Output 9: Gender equality and women's empowerment** are achieved through the preservation, revitalization, and promotion of Indigenous languages
- **Output 10: Public and private partnerships** are firmly established to place on the global agenda a long-term commitment to the preservation, revitalization, and promotion of Indigenous languages.

In terms of **activities**, the Global Action Plan also includes thirty (30) global activities in total which contribute to the attainment of outputs (three activities per output). These activities are interlinked and contribute to the enlargement of the functional scope of Indigenous languages and usage across socio-cultural, economic, environmental, legal, and political domains. More details about the proposed activities are found on pages 19 to 22 of the [Global Action Plan](#).

## Implementation Strategy

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages offers a **unique opportunity to collaborate** in policy development, to ensure continuity and coherence of actions and **stimulate an intercultural dialogue** in the true spirit of multi-stakeholder engagement. The scope of work envisaged during the Decade is beyond the capacity of any single nation, country, stakeholder group, generation, scientific discipline, policy framework or set of actions. This is why the Decade offers a unique framework for convening a wide range of stakeholders collectively to align their efforts, accelerate development plans, make strategic investments, set research and legislative agenda, and launch concrete initiatives around common goals.

**The theory of change** that guides the ambition of this programme is based on **UNESCO's convening power** to bring together various actors to work with each other. The activities to be implemented target such actors as indigenous people, government officials, policymakers, civil society organizations, the private sector representatives, as well as other UN and multilateral agencies and bilateral donors. Focusing on these various actors and supporting their individual and institutional capacity building put people and learning at the centre of development.

In alignment with the established results-based framework of the Global Action Plan, several broad implementation fields have been identified. The **five action areas** specified below are to enable **spearheading a sustainable implementation of the Global Action Plan for 2023-2024** and rally relevant stakeholders to commit to implementing the International Decade of Indigenous Languages for the duration of the Decade and beyond.

### 1. Four UNESCO Flagship projects

Drawing upon UNESCO's intersectoral programme on indigenous knowledge, cultures and languages, the following **four flagship projects will be initiated by UNESCO**, highlighting the thematic outputs of the Global Action Plan in multi-country projects (e.g., Africa, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs)):

- a) Under **Output 1 on education**, UNESCO will promote mother-tongue based multilingual education and works to remove barriers to accessing quality education for children in the linguistic minority, in particular indigenous children. The Organization updates the UNESCO Education in Multilingual World reference document and assist its Member States in elaborating

comprehensive and inclusive educational policies and practices (relating to Activities 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 of the Global Action Plan).

- b) Under **Output 3 on digital empowerment**, UNESCO promotes the use and translation of a Toolkit for Digital Activism for the training of communities to increase digital content in indigenous languages (relating to Activities 3.1 and 3.2 of the Global Action Plan).
- c) Under **Outputs 6 and 8 on culture and economic growth**, UNESCO will support capacity-building to safeguard indigenous people's living heritage, empowers indigenous people to be creative entrepreneurs to promote indigenous cultural goods and services, and support the designing and implementation of cultural policies (relating to Activities 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 of the Global Action Plan).
- d) Finally, under **Output 7 on biodiversity**, UNESCO will work to take into account indigenous peoples' rights and the protection and promotion of indigenous knowledge systems in the management of UNESCO designated sites. Local and indigenous communities will be empowered to actively participate in the sustainable development of the economy of Geoparks (relating to Activities 7.1 and 7.2 of the Global Action Plan).

## **2. Grassroots projects to be implemented by Indigenous Peoples**

The implementation of the Global Action Plan is first and foremost to benefit Indigenous Peoples' Organizations that work towards the protection, revitalization and promotion of indigenous knowledge, practices and languages. A limited number of **financial support or grants** will be provided to implement community-based projects by Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations in cooperation with other stakeholders. These projects will be aligned with the thirty activities of the Global Action Plan which contribute to the attainment of the outputs and will be reviewed and appraised by the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages.

## **3. Outreach and communication**

In order for the International Decade to yield the expected Outcomes, it is essential to undertake effective and global advocacy and awareness raising through a dedicated website and specific high-level meetings and partnerships. A comprehensive **Global Communication Strategy** will be developed and implemented to raise awareness on the importance of Indigenous languages for societal development; to communicate in multiple languages accurate, timely and valid information on the progress made in implementing the Global Action Plan, to a broad range of stakeholders; to stimulate social and intercultural debate, including political, academic and journalistic debates; and finally to impart new knowledge, data and facts on the importance of Indigenous languages. These actions will play a critical role in reaching out to multiple stakeholders by establishing partnerships, agreements and joint activities. This relates to Activities 9.2 and 10.3 of the Global Action Plan.

## **4. Engagement and participation of Indigenous Peoples in the IDIL2022-2032**

In order to ensure effective support for Indigenous languages, it is essential to enhance substantially the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and language users themselves, particularly Indigenous youth, women, and elderly people in all initiatives that are being organized. Funding would be allocated to enhance participation of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Peoples' institutions and organizations in the consultative processes related to the International Decade, as well as to strengthen partnerships with Goodwill Ambassadors, Special Rapporteurs, Envoys, Champions of Sports, Artists for Peace and other high visibility influencers and advocates. This relates to Activities 9.2 and 10.3.

## **5. IDIL2022-2032 coordination**

The management of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages is carried out by the Section for Universal Access to Information and Digital Inclusion in the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO. The Section provides support services in coordinating globally with UNDESA and other UN Agencies. The activities to take place include information dissemination and knowledge sharing about the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the translation of documentation and the participation in dedicated meetings.

The Section also organizes the meetings of the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages. The Global Task Force also provides guidance on the implementation of the Global Action Plan, taking into account regional, national and local specificities and is composed of representatives of UNESCO Member States, designated members of UN mechanisms on Indigenous peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples' institutions and organizations and UN organizations. Three meetings are organized per year in hybrid format with interpretation services in English, French, Russian and Spanish . The Global Task Force and other relevant stakeholders will also come together every three years, in a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting to discuss progress on the implementation of the Global Action Plan.

The Section also organizes the meetings of the Intersectoral Task Team for the Organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. This Task Team was established within the UNESCO Secretariat to ensure a multi-disciplinary and transversal approach to the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL2022-2032). The Task Team meets virtually every three months and when necessary, for specific tasks such as the preparation of the High-Level Celebration of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. This coordination work relates to the overall governance of the and coordination framework of the Global Action Plan.

## Stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners

The International Decade provides a unique framework for **international cooperation involving all stakeholders** as a part of a global response to the increasing loss of languages, to contribute to the preservation, revitalization, and promotion of Indigenous languages. The Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages plays an important role to ensure the equitable participation of all stakeholders in the International Decade.

The International Decade involves a large number of diverse stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners as outlined below, and prides itself on the strong engagement of its Indigenous partners, who are encouraged to take ownership of the International Decade. In particular, the International Decade places an emphasis on the participation of **Indigenous youth, women, and elders**, as well as **teachers, language professionals (interpreters, translators), and language technology developers**, recognizing the crucial role of all of these groups in transmitting languages and developing innovative and sustainable conditions for their widespread use. To facilitate the engagement of these diverse groups, UNESCO is managing a [dedicated website](#), where members of the community come together to share their experiences, best practices, and information on activities, events, publications and others.